

FINLAND'S  
WAR OF INDEPENDENCE



GENERAL BARON GUSTAV MANNERHEIM, MAY, 1918

# FINLAND'S WAR OF INDEPENDENCE

by  
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## PREFACE

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I have much pleasure in introducing this short history of Finland's War of Independence to British readers, and I do so all the more readily because, at a later stage, I had the good fortune to serve under the Finnish Government with many of the Commanders whose names are mentioned, and to hear their first-hand accounts of operations herein described.

There is yet another reason and it is that the "civic guards", who figured so prominently throughout the campaign, to-day correspond more closely to our own Territorial Army than any other force in the world, with the possible exception of the National Guards of the United States of America.

The reader may be surprised by the smallness of the forces engaged in many of the engagements. This was due to the vast extent and nature of the country, compared with the population which it is able to support, and to the great difficulties of maintaining troops when concentrated at any distance from the few railways.

Finland is considerably larger than the British Isles, but in 1918 it had a population of only some three and a half millions, of which the majority were on the shores of the Baltic or Gulf of Finland rather than in the interior, where the earlier operations took place. Almost everywhere the country is broken up by innumerable lakes and swamps,

whilst the remainder is for the most part strewn with rocks and boulders of every size and shape, swept down from the north in some primeval ice-flow, and now covered by the dense forest which forms Finland's chief source of wealth.

Only when lakes and rivers are frozen and snow covers everything is it possible to move across country with any freedom, and then only by troops equipped with skis and sledges.

In such conditions the short days, the long, dark and bitterly cold nights create fresh difficulties, particularly that of shelter, and this gave to the small villages and hamlets a tactical importance almost equal to that attached to the possession of water in an eastern campaign.

The political factors running through the struggle are intricate and bear no very clear relation to the major issues of the World War.

During the nineteenth century, when the rulers of Russia respected the guarantee regarding the autonomy of Finland given by Czar Alexander I and Finland showed complete loyalty to the Empire, many capable Finns, including General Mannerheim, entered the service of the Russian Army and advanced to important positions. The harsh measures which the Russians introduced in Finland at the turn of the century brought into being a movement for liberation which sent some 2,000 young Finns to Germany, where they obtained military training in order to be ready, when the moment arrived, to fight for the freedom of their fatherland. Later, during the war of independence, these Finns proved to be of great value as trainers and leaders of the White Army.

The Bolshevik Revolution, however, on 8th November, 1917, whilst it released large numbers of German troops

from the Eastern Front, also removed any military necessity for extending operations into Finland and indeed made it politically undesirable for Germany to do anything to antagonize the Bolshevik Government whilst peace negotiations were in progress. Thus it was that when the decisive hour struck in January, 1918, the Finnish patriots were left to begin their fight for freedom alone, without any foreign assistance.

Fortunately for Finland, the hour produced the man.

The account perhaps does less than justice to the extraordinary daring of the first attacks in Ostrobothnia, made by General Mannerheim with a few practically unarmed and untrained peasants against well-equipped regular Russian troops, who were in occupation of all the key positions.

The event showed that a considerable portion of these latter were mainly interested in getting back to Russia to share in the paradise which they were assured was about to be created there.

At a later stage the majority were withdrawn by order of the Bolshevik Government, but, unfortunately for Finland, before leaving they successfully inoculated a large part of the uneducated and simple Finnish working-classes with their new doctrine and also bequeathed to them a vast amount of equipment. By so doing they converted a struggle for independence against a common foe into a ruthless civil war, the scars from which are only now healing, thanks to the liberal policy of the Finnish Government.

Though ill led, these Red Finns, inured to the hard conditions of a Finnish winter, proved a far more dangerous and determined foe than their Russian friends, and the account generously recognizes their individual gallantry.

But whilst General Mannerheim might see in his own

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countrymen his most dangerous enemy, he had always to reckon with the possibility that the Bolshevik Government would not inertly watch the suppression of its pupils and protagonists and might come to their assistance.

It was his object, therefore, to cut the communications between Finland and Russia across the comparatively flat and open Carelian Isthmus, as soon as his own base of operations was sufficiently secure.

The decisive battle of Tampere on April 3rd settled the fate of Central and Western Finland in his favour, giving him control of threequarters of the country and opening a way for the second stage, which he lost no time in inaugurating.

In the meantime, however, the situation from the German point of view had changed.

Peace negotiations with the Bolshevik Government had been broken off on February 18th, and the re-creation of a Russian front against the Central Powers was once more a possibility. It would, therefore, be a sound strategic move to place a Finnish-German force in a position to advance on Petrograd from Finland, and so forestall any British attempt in that direction from the northern ports of Murmansk and Archangel. These ports being outside the British anti-submarine defences in the North Sea might also prove useful bases for German submarines. Considerable stocks of arms were despatched to the White Army as a first instalment of this new policy, and a force of all arms got ready to follow.

General Mannerheim himself had no wish to be involved in the issues of the World War, but was intent only on securing the independence of Finland, which object he was well on the way to achieving with the army he had created.

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The Government, however, which had remained in the south of Finland, but had been deprived of its power by the Red coup, faced General Mannerheim with a *fait accompli* in that they appealed to Germany for assistance against his expressed wish.

As events proved, however, the accession of the well-equipped and highly trained German troops under General von der Goltz and Colonel von Brandenstein undoubtedly shortened the struggle, and saved great loss of life and property.

Eventually the outcome of the World War resolved a delicate situation by the withdrawal of the German troops under pressure from the Allies, without Finland having been committed to either one side or the other.

For this happy solution thanks are mainly due to General Mannerheim.

At this critical juncture in her history Finland was fortunate in finding a soldier who combined outstanding organizing and strategic ability with political foresight and statesmanship of the highest order.

And though in comparison with the far greater events of the World War the campaign with which this account deals may seem but a small one, it established Finland as a barrier to the spread of doctrines which might otherwise have infected the whole of Scandinavia, with incalculable results.

To-day this virile, honest and enlightened people stand as an outpost of Western civilization on the frontiers of the unknown.

W. KIRKE,

9th May, 1939

General



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## CHAPTER ONE

# EARLY HISTORY AND PREPARATIONS

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### *Active Resistance and the Jäger Movement Preparations for Independence*

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For autonomous Finland,<sup>1</sup> connected with Russia, the nineteenth century was a period of great economic and cultural progress. At the same time a feeling of national consciousness was awakened among the people, inspired by a growing determination both to develop the inherent potentialities of the country on a national basis and to preserve the position already gained among European nations. It was therefore only natural that they should react in a determined manner to the policy of Russianization introduced towards the end of the century, the final object of which was to destroy Finland's privileged position,

<sup>1</sup> At the beginning of the nineteenth century Finland had formed part of Sweden for fully five hundred years—the Swedish conquest began in the 1150's and was completed about 1300—but in the war between Sweden and Russia in 1808-9, in which the Russians were victorious, the country fell a prey to the conquerors. This war was carried on in connection with the Napoleonic wars; Sweden was an ally of Britain, Russia an ally of France. The Russian invasion was decided on at Tilsit during a meeting between Napoleon and Alexander I. The Czar, however, allowed the conquered country to retain its constitution and its other laws and granted it an autonomous position in the Russian Empire.

denationalize its people and submerge its individuality in the great ocean of Slavonic nations.

The systematic attack on the Finnish autonomy began in 1899, when a manifesto of the Czar of Russia greatly restricted the rights of the Finnish diet, and at the same time decrees were issued which were contrary to Finland's constitution. In 1901 a new and illegal military law was published, according to which the military decrees that were in force in Russia were to be extended also to Finland; the intention being to destroy Finland's own national army. When the Russians tried to enforce the new military law, a large proportion of the conscripts failed to arrive at the levy, and the authorities had to abandon the enterprise. Instead Finland was compelled illegally to pay an annual contribution in lieu of military service, and the Russians dissolved the Finnish armed forces. From that time on Finland was without any army of its own; the so-called 'Finnish' troops in the Russian Army during the World War were not Finnish, but Russian troops who had been stationed in Finland in peace-time.

The Russian authorities made several other decrees in contravention of Finland's autonomy: the Press was censored, freedom of speech and meeting was restricted, Russians were appointed to high offices, the Russian language became the official language in Government circles, and Finland's Russian Governor-General was given the right to banish any person he considered antagonistic to Russian interests. The Finnish officials, with the support of the majority of the people, tried to hamper and hinder these oppressive measures by passive resistance.

Passive resistance to the Russian policy of force, however, became less and less effective, and it was clear that only by meeting it with armed force could Finland be

saved from complete absorption. But the chances of a successful armed resistance were at first infinitesimal. As a preliminary, relations were established with the Russian revolutionary parties and, in the autumn of 1904, a party of active resistance was organized in Finland.

The war between Russia and Japan, which had broken out in February of that year, provided a great opportunity for the Russian revolutionaries and, equally, for the Finnish active resisters. At a joint congress in Paris it was decided, among other things, to institute propaganda against the war and fan the disaffection in Russia. The Finnish delegates, however, went still further and made proposals to the Japanese as a result of which the Japanese military attaché in Stockholm placed funds at their disposal for purchasing arms. In Switzerland 15,500 army rifles were bought, as well as  $2\frac{1}{2}$  million cartridges and three tons of explosives, and a few hundred army revolvers were obtained in Germany and the United States; of these the Russian revolutionaries were to dispose of two-thirds and the Finns of one-third. The smuggling of arms into Russia proved abortive, but a quantity were landed in two places in North Finland, on the coast of the Gulf of Bothnia.

Although this episode was of no great practical importance, it was a warning to the Russian authorities, and not the only one at this time. On the 16th June, 1904, the young patriot, Eugen Schauman, shot the Governor-General Nikolai Bobrikoff, the inveterate enemy of Finland and the ruthless executor of the policy of oppression, and a few weeks later the hated Minister of the Interior, W. von Plehve, was assassinated in Petrograd. The percussion was felt everywhere and soon developed into a widespread revolutionary movement. Demonstrations,

attempts at revolt and bloody encounters showed that throughout the Empire the foundations of the Czarist régime had begun to totter ominously.

In October, 1905, a general strike was proclaimed both in Russia and in Finland, which boded ill for the existing régime. At the same time signs of grave internal dissensions increased in Finland: and the appearance of armed Red Guards was a premonition of fateful events. Although these organizations, which were not of an exclusively social-revolutionary character at first, bore to some extent a nationalist stamp, their actions gave rise to counter-measures by the bourgeois elements. The dissensions subsequently became so acute that in August, 1906, an armed collision causing several casualties occurred in Helsinki.<sup>1</sup>

The revolutionary movement had in the meantime forced the authorities in Russia temporarily to modify their policy; the most important manifestation of this change as regards Finland being the issue of an imperial proclamation in November, 1905, by which the majority of the illegal decrees of the preceding year were rescinded.

This was a great success for passive resistance. The active resisters, however, as well as many other far-seeing citizens, realized that the Czar's concessions were merely dictated by pressure of circumstances, and that the easing of the tension was only superficial. Russia's momentary weakness had to be exploited and preparations for the final struggle had to be continued with increased energy. Thus was established the so-called Voima league ("voima" is the Finnish word for "force"), an armed organization, the membership of which soon numbered 20,000. Unfortunately the authorities heard of it and the league was

<sup>1</sup> A list of the principal places in Finnish and Swedish will be found at the end of the book.

## ACTIVE RESISTANCE AND THE JÄGER MOVEMENT

disbanded, but short as its life had been, its activities were far from insignificant, for it had spread the idea of independence.

The forecast of the active resisters proved to be right. In a few years Russianization began afresh and more intensively than before. According to a statement in the Duma by the Council of State and the Council of Ministers the privileged national position of Finland was definitely to be abolished, and from that time onwards the Russian virus gradually began to permeate all spheres of social and cultural life in Finland.

Yet the idea of an independent Finland had definitely taken root and during this fresh period of oppression it continued to gain in strength, especially among the younger generation.

The Great War broke out and with it the struggle for Finland's independence entered upon a new phase. It was obvious that in one way or another the country should take full advantage of the opportunities afforded by the world-wide conflagration, though the best way to act was not very clear. The Entente Powers had declared that they were fighting for the rights of the small nations, and many believed that at the final settlement they would therefore assist Finland, provided the country remained loyal to Russia and her allies during the struggle. The older generation, in particular, considered that the best policy was to fulfil their duty to the Russian ruler with unswerving fidelity, and in this way induce the authorities in Russia to adopt a more liberal attitude. Efforts were made to arouse enthusiasm for the Russian cause in Finland, even to the extent of a proposal to form a Finnish army to take the field on the Russian side; but this idea

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had no result other than the enlistment of a few adventurous youths into the ranks of the Russian army.

On the other hand, large classes of the Finnish population had had enough of Russian "fair play" and Russian promises. They considered that Finland should take her fate into her own hands and combine with the enemy of the oppressor. This view was strengthened by the measures adopted by the Russians in Finland three months after the outbreak of war, which gave clear proof of their intention to destroy finally Finland's autonomy. The news that one of the leading champions of Finnish rights, P. E. Svinhufvud,<sup>1</sup> had been arrested while performing his official duties, and later exiled to Siberia, further justified this point of view and made it increasingly apparent that Finland could be saved only by the complete defeat of Russia.

The young men were the first to act. The students courageously decided to form a military organization which was to lead the struggle for liberty as soon as a favourable moment arrived. They counted on a possible German landing in Finland, and it was even thought that Sweden might come into the war, starting operations to the east of the Gulf of Bothnia. In either case the Finns should be ready to rise under the command of trained leaders of their own. Preliminary enquiries soon showed that the Finnish military organization could not establish itself in Sweden, and that Germany was the only suitable country for the purpose. In December, 1914, an application, addressed to the German military authorities, was handed to the German Military Attaché in Stockholm, requesting that two hundred students from Finland be

<sup>1</sup> The first Regent of Independent Finland, 1917-18, and President of the Republic of Finland, 1931-7.

given the opportunity of military training in Germany. This request was granted.

The students' organization had thereby taken its first important step. Energetic recruiting was started immediately in Finland, and as early as the 25th January, 1915, the first detachment of the future "Jägers" arrived in Berlin. During the following month 130 students left Finland, while among the Finns living in Germany 36 volunteered, a few more coming from Scandinavia and one solitary student from America. At the end of February, 1915, a so-called "junior-leaders (*feldmeister*)" course was started in the Lockstedt Camp in Holstein, in which 183 Finns took part. Most of the men were students, but they also included trained doctors, veterinary surgeons, engineers, graduates in philosophy, journalists, etc. Their average age was twenty-four. The course was to last four weeks. Major Maximilian Bayer, the former leader of the German scouts or "Reichsfeldmeister", was put in charge of the course, and given almost a free hand. Nominally the men formed a detachment of scouts and, in order to conceal the actual object of the course, they were dressed in German scout uniforms, and were not incorporated in the German Army.

Soon, however, the venture encountered strong opposition. Certain influential German circles, whose object was a separate peace between Germany and Russia, considered Finland's efforts at independence detrimental to Germany's interests, as they increased the difficulty of achieving an understanding with Russia. This idea received considerable support from both the German Foreign Office and War Office, and the adverse influence became evident when the four weeks' course at Lockstedt came to an end and the question of continuing was raised.

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During this time the independence movement had spread in Finland. It now began to receive support from older and more authoritative circles and the active resisters were consequently less inclined than ever to abandon the struggle. After much vacillation the Lockstedt detachment was not only saved but, on the 16th August, 1915, the Emperor William II signed an order with his own hand for the enlargement of the detachment to a battalion of 2,000 men with the necessary auxiliary services. Major Bayer was appointed chief of the "Ausbildungstruppe Lockstedt" with the powers of a battalion commander, and an adequate staff was placed at his disposal.

The order for the establishment of the battalion was proclaimed in the camp at a parade of the detachment, and at the same time 66 Finnish "Feldmeister" were promoted to the rank of platoon, section, and group commander. The following War Office order was also read out to the detachment:

"The detachment is intended to take foreigners who apply voluntarily for admission. Those accepted do not become German citizens. The Army authorities do not accept any responsibility in regard to the future acquisition of citizenship, nor do they undertake to provide permanent support in the event of any one being wounded in the German Army and thereby incapacitated. Likewise, in the event of incapacity or death, the relatives have no claims against the State. Every entrant shall be expressly informed of this in writing.

"Foreigners on entering the service must be informed that they are liable to serve the German State, to obey all orders of their superiors and submit to the German civil and military laws as well as to any orders in force during time of war."

## PREPARATIONS FOR INDEPENDENCE

In other words there were to be strict liabilities, but no rights. Great faith and devotion were therefore demanded of the men who were willing to train themselves for the decisive struggle of their country under such conditions.

In the meantime the movement for Finnish independence was taking organized shape in Finland, Sweden and Germany. The older politicians who supported it appointed a committee, and in the autumn despatched a representative to Stockholm as a member of the Foreign Delegation for Finland's independence movement. The actual leadership of the movement was, however, exercised by the Active Committee, which included a number of patriotic Finnish ex-officers who, when Russia disbanded Finland's conscript army in 1901, had already joined the active resisters. On the outbreak of the Great War they had formed a secret committee, the Military Committee, to support the movement, and which was later to be chiefly responsible for the preparations for the War of Independence.

One of the tasks of the Active Committee was to take charge of the Jäger movement in Finland, and to organize recruiting for the expansion of the Lockstedt detachment in the autumn of 1915. Within a short time volunteers had enrolled throughout the country in large numbers, and secret stage-routes were organized, along which the future Jägers were sent to Sweden. Thousands of people of different classes were involved in this dangerous work, for the struggle was now developing into a powerful national movement. An important influence was exercised by a number of the original Lockstedt detachment, who had been ordered home to help recruiting and to take part in the work of the secret stations. The men going to Germany proceeded by three routes across the frontier to

Sweden, being given money by the recruiters for their journey as far as the Swedish frontier, and particulars of the stations in Sweden, where an organization had been set up for conveying them to their destinations. Its centre was established in Stockholm and a number of Finns from Lockstedt belonged to it.

This great expansion of recruiting naturally attracted the attention of the Russians, who arrested many of the active organization, while others had to leave the country. A few of those arrested were deported to Siberia, but the majority were imprisoned in Petrograd. Owing to these preventive measures, recruiting had to be stopped in April, 1916, but was renewed in the autumn, when twenty Jägers were sent back to Finland to organize and run the secret stations, others being entrusted with special duties in the north of Finland. The working of the route became exceedingly difficult and dangerous, as the Russian gendarmes began effective counter-measures which reached their height at the end of 1916. House searches, arrests, imprisonment and banishment were of everyday occurrence. During that gloomy winter hope in many hearts was extinguished. For them, the fate of Finland appeared to be sealed, and the movement for liberty doomed. But even the severest oppressive measures were unable to quench the glowing embers of revolt which had now spread over the whole of Finland, and which were to break into flame in the War of Independence.

In the meantime the Lockstedt detachment had grown into a battalion of nearly 2,000 men, in which all classes of society were represented; and, taken as a whole, they were excellent material. As the majority of the men could not speak German, the German instructors had to be assisted in the training by the Finnish junior leaders, and

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in this way some of the Finns were initiated into the duties of officers and N.C.O.s.

The Finnish battalion was stronger than the normal German battalion, and it was organized into four companies of infantry, a pioneer and a machine-gun company, and a half-battery of artillery (subsequently extended to a full battery). It even possessed a brass band. About 1,900 men were enrolled in the battalion, but the total number at any time never exceeded about 1,800. That it developed into an excellent unit is proved by the inclusion of it among the illustrious Prussian Jäger battalions, for on the 9th May, 1916, the battalion was officially named the "Königliches Preussisches Jägerbataillon 27", and the men donned the green Jäger uniforms. They were soon to have an opportunity to show their mettle, as their commander had already, at the beginning of 1916, planned to send the battalion to the front. Not only was it essential that the nucleus of the troops in Finland's fight for freedom should gain some war experience before the struggle in Finland began, but it was absurd, from the German point of view, that a detachment, perfectly ready for battle, should remain unemployed in camp. There was also a risk that the influential people who had originally opposed the formation of the battalion might still succeed in having it disbanded on the plea that it was unnecessary, and even injurious to Germany, unless employed in some useful manner.

It was not advisable, however, to send a battalion so precious to Finland to a battle-front where it might be exposed to heavy loss. After careful consideration, both by the battalion itself and by the Stockholm committee, it was decided to send it to a comparatively quiet sector, selected by Major Bayer, on the River Misse, east of the

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Mitau-Riga railway. On the 31st May, 1916, the Finnish battalion set off eastward, leaving a detachment behind for training recruits at Lockstedt. On the 3rd June it reached Mitau, the ancient capital of Courland, whence it moved a few days later to the Misce sector. It was considered a safe sector because the boggy ground in front made a frontal attack improbable, but the atmosphere of war was not lacking. The days were spent in keeping guard and improving the positions, while nightly reconnaissances and intensified artillery fire provided an occasional change. The infantry companies and the machine-gun company were in the front line, the pioneer company was kept busy on construction work, and the artillery half-battery, which had had a comparatively short training, was able to complete its education by practical tasks. War experience gained in this way was, indeed, rather one-sided, but as the employment of the battalion for offensive purposes might jeopardize its real object, efforts were made to refrain from using it in such manner.

At the end of August the battalion was moved from Misce to the extreme left wing of the German Eastern Front, on the shore of the Gulf of Riga. This sector was not so quiet. The opposing trenches were in some places very close, reconnaissances were fuller of adventure, the trenches were subjected daily to artillery fire, and on several occasions the Russians made local attacks to drive the Finns out of their position and to interfere with their digging work by raids.

In the middle of December the battalion was moved behind the front to Libau, and on the 18th of that month a meeting of decisive importance for its future was held in Berlin. At this meeting, in which the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, the War Office, the Admiralty Staff and the

Jäger Battalion were represented, it was decided that the battalion was to be maintained and that Finland's efforts to gain independence were to be given continued support. The training of the battalion was, however, to be adapted to its future activities in Finland. It was only to be employed at the front when compatible with Finnish interests.

A little later another important event occurred: there was a change in its command. Major Bayer was promoted to command a regiment on the Western Front, and had to bid farewell to the Finnish battalion, which he had led during the whole of its existence. He had shown an understanding both of its special nature and of its object, and had from the outset worked in the interests of Finland. His successor, Captain Knaths, did not display the same understanding or interest in the battalion.

When the Russian revolution broke out, it was obvious to the Jägers that the moment for action was drawing near. They considered it essential to employ the remainder of their time abroad in training officers according to the methods approved by Major Bayer, whereas Captain Knaths' scheme of training consisted only in a repetition of old and familiar matters. The battalion and the delegation therefore took steps to obtain a more practical and interesting scheme and, besides the training of officers and N.C.O.s, special training was arranged for those Jägers found to be suitable for armourers, motor-transport drivers, wireless operators, shoemsmiths, and so on, in depots, repair shops and works in Libau and other towns. At the same time, a military training manual was drawn up in Finnish, and Finnish began to be used as the language in which orders were given. At the end of September, 1917, Captain Knaths was succeeded by Captain Eduard Ausfeld, who

had worked energetically in favour of the new training scheme, and now directed it in a most efficient manner. In this way the Jägers prepared themselves by degrees for the struggle to liberate their country.

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*The Position in Finland after the Outbreak of the Russian Revolution. The Immediate Preparation for War*

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The outbreak of the Russian Revolution at first caused a serious divergence of political opinion in Finland. The Provisional Government of Russia had already declared the re-establishment of Finland's autonomy in a manifesto published in March, 1917, and had rescinded the illegal decrees of the Czarist régime. Many people therefore believed that Finland would be able to exist happily and safely under the suzerainty of a new free Russia, and the suggestion made at the beginning of the Great War that Finland should support the Russians by placing volunteer forces at their disposal was revived.

The active resisters, however, still maintained that the promises of the Russians were not to be relied on, and that the advantageous position created by the revolution should be used in every possible way to bring about Finland's separation from Russia. The partisans of the movement for independence accordingly showed renewed activity; the co-operation between the Active Committee and the Military Committee became closer, new supporters for the movement were gained in the different parties, and funds were collected.

As it was evident that an armed rising in Finland in existing circumstances was only practicable with German assistance, the Military Committee had sent a deputation to Stockholm at the end of April, 1917, with instructions to establish contact with General Headquarters in Germany. The representatives of the German Headquarters could, however, promise nothing definite as regards a landing such as the Finns requested, but, at the same time, stated that Germany would probably be able to assist Finland by supplying war material.

During the summer preparations were begun for a national rising with the object of driving out of Finland the Russian military garrisons which had become increasingly undisciplined after the revolution. Throughout the country fighting organizations and civic guards were established, disguised under the name of voluntary fire-brigades wherever special caution was necessary. The country was divided into districts, and the organizations were entirely outside any considerations of party or class; at first many social-democrat workmen joined, which was perfectly natural in view of the positive attitude of the Social Democratic Party towards the problem of independence up to that time. The enthusiasm displayed showed that the Finnish nation was, as a whole, ready to form a united front against Russia.

Within a couple of months these high hopes were frustrated. As Bolshevism gained ground in Russia, the anarchy in Finland increased. The worst elements among the proletariat began to fraternize with the Russian soldiery, and, simultaneously, the Social Democratic Party withdrew from the independence movement. The situation was developing towards social revolution. The Civic Guards were a protection, but the working class was being

instigated against them by representing that they were a guard for the upper and middle classes, intended for use against the workpeople. The Social Democratic press, wishing to encourage agitation, unscrupulously spread distorted reports of cases in which the Civic Guards had intervened against arbitrary actions of Russian soldiery and Finnish hooligans. As a result, the workpeople everywhere began to resent the Civic Guards.

The defeat of the Socialists in the General Election to the Parliament on the 1st and 2nd October 1917<sup>1</sup> proved of decisive importance. After losing their majority in Parliament they inclined more towards the Russian Bolsheviks, whose seizure of power in Russia they regarded as merely a question of time. In short, the Social Democrats who, only a few months earlier, eagerly supported the efforts to achieve independence, now threatened, if necessary with the help of the Russians, to enforce their own demands.

Early in the autumn, on the initiative of some persons belonging to the left wing of the Social Democrats, a secret meeting was held at Tampere, and it was decided to form a red guard, as in 1905. The example of Tampere was soon followed in Helsinki and other places. At first the red guard was recruited from the worst elements of the proletariat, including vagrants and criminals, and the more sober elements among the workpeople did not join up.

The November revolution in Russia, by which the Bolsheviks came into power, was followed in Finland by

<sup>1</sup> The Finnish Parliament consists of a single chamber of 200 members, elected on the principle of general and equal suffrage for men and women. The single-chamber system and general suffrage were introduced in 1906. In the election in the summer of 1916 the Socialists had secured 103 seats, but in the election referred to above the number of their seats dropped to 92.

a general strike, and this was the prelude to the social revolution. While the strike continued, the red guard, in conjunction with the Russians and the Finnish rabble, was guilty of a number of murders and other acts of violence.

The strength of the red guard was still comparatively small, but after the general strike it increased rapidly. On the 16th–18th December its leaders held a meeting in Tampere which was of great importance. Among other matters much attention was devoted at this meeting to organization. The country was divided into twelve military districts, and various reforms were introduced with the object of improving military unity and discipline. At the same time regulations were drawn up, in which the object of the red guard was stated to be the defence of the rights of the working class and the achievement of the aims of the labour movement. It was announced that the guard was subordinated politically to the council of the Socialist Party and the trade-union leaders, but an addition, vague in form, was made to this definition which subsequently proved to be very important: "If another supreme organ of the revolution should be established, the political right of decision shall be transferred to it."

This reservation was an indication of the dissension that still existed at that time between the red guard and the leaders of the Social Democratic Party. Among the latter the opponents of unparliamentary methods were still in the majority, but, notwithstanding this, the leaders were powerless to cope with the results of their own work of agitation. The excited masses had been led to believe that the "gains of the revolution" and the working class were in grave and imminent danger and that to remove

#### EARLY HISTORY AND PREPARATIONS

this danger the power of the upper class and the bourgeois must be destroyed as soon as possible.

The question of co-operating with the Russian troops was an important detail in these preparations for revolt. At first the leaders of the Russian troops did not adopt a particularly trustful attitude towards the red guard. They were naturally suspicious of an armed force which, although of a revolutionary character, claimed to be independent of them. The Bolsheviks seizure of power in Russia, however, greatly increased the chances of a collaboration for which the Finnish red guard was eager.

Although a part of the Finnish nation was thus being attracted to the side of the enemy, preparations for the struggle for liberty continued with zeal and energy. At the beginning of September, Captain H. Akerman, a member of the Military Committee, had joined the Government, taking one of the vacancies caused by the resignation of the Socialist senators. At Akerman's suggestion the Government appointed a military commission to draft a new conscription law. As all the members of the commission belonged to the Military Committee, the action of the Government implied its legalization and facilitated its work in every respect.

With a view to remedying the shortage of officers and equipment among the Civic Guards, negotiations were begun with the Germans in the summer and autumn to supply arms and to send Jäger officers home, and in October, before the truce was arranged on the Eastern Front, about forty Jägers, a quantity of rifles, machine guns and ammunition, a couple of wireless stations, explosives, etc., had been transported to Finland, either by steamer or submarine. These first Jäger officers and

transports of arms were of great value in beginning the struggle for the freedom of the country.

As events during the general strike in November had left little doubt that an armed contest was approaching, the Military Committee worked for the return of the entire Jäger battalion. The new Finnish Government, under the leadership of P. E. Svinhufvud, and composed entirely of reliable partisans of the independence movement, had also taken steps independently to arrange for a German military auxiliary expedition to Finland. The German High Command, however, declared that German military operations in Finland, which still belonged to Russia, would increase the difficulty of the peace negotiations then in progress between Germany and Russia at Brest Litovsk. If, however, Finland proclaimed her independence, Germany might, by exerting pressure at Brest Litovsk, obtain Russian acknowledgement of Finland's independence and, in addition, demand the removal of the Russian troops from the country. Should these steps have no result, a German landing in Finland was conceivable, if the war on the Eastern Front was resumed. At the same time, the Germans promised to continue the interrupted supply of arms and to send the Jäger battalion home.

On the 4th December the Government issued a proclamation of independence, and on the 6th it was sanctioned by Parliament. Finland had thus declared herself independent and, after German pressure, Russia granted her recognition at the beginning of January, the other European states following her example by degrees.

For the moment, however, Finland's independence had no practical significance. The armed red guards took no notice of the orders of the Government, and the Russians

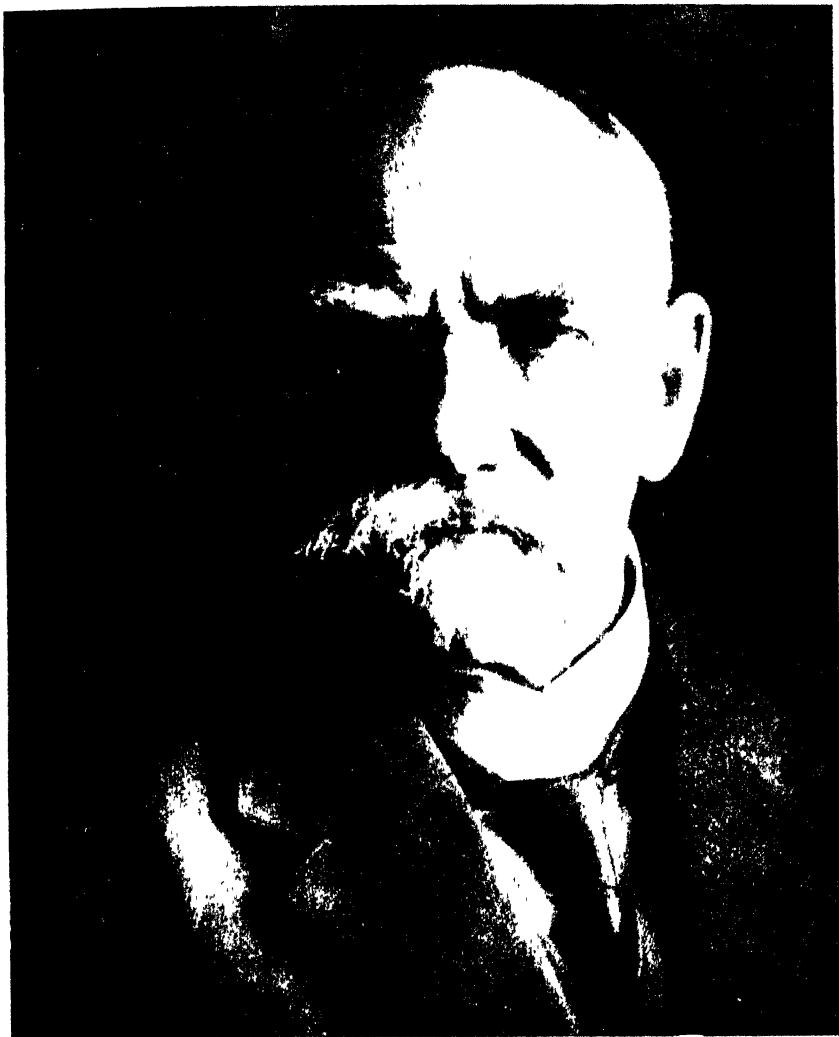
## EARLY HISTORY AND PREPARATIONS

had evidently no intention of withdrawing their troops. On the contrary, the Russian authorities openly declared that Russia's recognition of Finland's independence had been granted on the assumption that the workpeople would soon seize power in the country, whereupon its reunion with Russia would follow automatically.

The Government lacked its most important attribute: armed force. It was, however, in close contact with the Military Committee in regard to the maintenance of order and the creation of an army of its own. In the autumn, prior to the November strike, a training course for mounted police had been arranged at Saksanniemi, near Porvoo, east of Helsinki, but it had been dispersed by the reds during the strike. This school now reassembled at Lappajärvi in Ostrobothnia, and another training school for recruits was started at Jalasjärvi, but the training was still in the initial stage when the war broke out.

The Government also supported the Civic Guards in every possible way, though at first unofficially. On the initiative of the executive of the Active Committee, a school for officers was started at Vimpeli at the end of December, under the leadership of the chief of the Vaasa Civic Guards District, General v. Gerich, a Finn who had served in the Russian Army and fought in the battles on the Eastern Front in 1914-17. About a dozen Jägers acted as teachers, but owing to a great shortage of officers the training course had to be ended in January after three months' hard work. In view of the good results obtained, another training course was started at once, this time at Vöyri. These courses proved of the greatest value.

The difficult problem of finding a supreme commander was solved in the most fortunate way imaginable in the middle of January, when General Baron Carl Gustaf



PRESIDENT P. E. SVINHUFVUD

#### THE IMMEDIATE PREPARATION FOR WAR

Mannerheim, who had returned to Finland in December, accepted the post of Commander-in-Chief offered him by the Military Committee. General Mannerheim was a brilliant officer, who belonged to a family occupying an honoured place in the annals of Finland. Although he had served in Russia since his youth, he had maintained close contact with his own country and had remained a keen patriot. He had distinguished himself by his qualities of leadership in the Russo-Japanese War in 1904-5 and had held high commands in the Great War. He had a strong, inspiring personality, a clear and active brain combined with a thorough knowledge and wide experience of war. A member of the Military Committee mentions that Mannerheim's bearing at the first meeting which he attended made a deep impression on all present: "We realized that we had before us the very man we wanted, a commanding, energetic and self-confident soldier."

General Mannerheim urged at once that the military direction of the struggle should be centralized in one command and staff and that it should be established without delay at the future base of operations, South Ostrobothnia. He was anxious to take hold of the reins, but could not do so with a committee working in Helsinki. On the 16th January the head of the Government empowered General Mannerheim verbally to take over the command of the "Government troops", and to take military action to establish order. Before he had time to receive any official commission or detailed instructions as Commander-in-Chief, General Mannerheim proceeded on the 18th January to Vaasa, accompanied by the Military Committee, which was reorganized as his staff.

Meanwhile the attitude of the Russians since the Bolshevik revolution had become increasingly favourable to

## EARLY HISTORY AND PREPARATIONS

the Finnish reds and spurred them to take action. At the beginning of December Lenin delivered a speech in Petrograd in which he said that "if the citizens of Finland buy arms from the Germans in order to turn them against their own workmen, we offer these latter an alliance with Russia's working classes"; and a little later, Stalin declared to the representatives of the Finnish proletariat: "If you need our help, we will give it to you, fraternally offering you our hand." By the 13th January this collaboration had so progressed that the secretary of the General Staff of the red guard was able to state that Lenin had officially promised 10,000 rifles, as well as machine guns, and that there was to be no question of payment until the Finnish work-people had triumphed and seized power.

At a meeting on the 23rd January the Council of the Social Democratic Party admitted the claim of the red guards that the leadership of the party should include representatives of the extreme left. The council set up a committee from among its members, entitled "The Executive Committee of the Council of the Finnish Social Democratic Party", which proceeded to make immediate preparations for a rising. It based itself on the clause, already referred to, in the regulations of the red guard to the effect that "if another supreme organization of the revolution should be established, the political right of decision shall be transferred to it."

The committee began by giving the red guard instructions for revolt and encouraging the Russians to active co-operation, and when the Civic Guards disarmed some Russian detachments in Carelia on the 23rd-25th January, the 42nd Russian Army Corps declared war on the "white guards". During the night 25th-26th January the Russians armed the reds in Helsinki and other places.

#### THE IMMEDIATE PREPARATION FOR WAR

Numbering about thirty thousand and supported by the Russians, the reds now found themselves ready for action, and felt confident of a rapid victory. But they had underestimated the opposition, for in South Ostrobothnia General Mannerheim and his peasant troops were ready to strike.

## CHAPTER TWO

# THE FIRST OPERATIONS AND FORMATION OF THE FRONT

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*The Plan of the Commander-in-Chief. The Beginning of the War of Independence in Carelia and South Ostrobothnia*

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General Mannerheim and his staff arrived in Vaasa on the 19th January to direct operations to "restore order", and few commanders can have begun work under more difficult conditions. He had only a very vague idea of the strength either of his own forces or of those of his adversary. The total strength of the red guards was estimated at about thirty thousand, but there was no reliable information about their armament. The Russian troops in Finland represented a dangerous and unknown quantity; it was only known that their main body was in South Finland, and that of those, estimated at not more than 8,000, north of the line Pori-Tampere-Viipuri, 5,000-6,000 were stationed in South Ostrobothnia and in the districts of Oulu and Tornio.

The only basis on which the Commander-in-Chief could appreciate the situation was that, at the outset, South Finland would probably fall into the hands of the enemy. The struggle would therefore be in the nature of a com-

#### THE PLAN OF THE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF

paratively prolonged war demanding the establishment of an efficient army, the organization of which would have to be carried out within a base area protected by covering troops. This view of the situation led to the decision first to conquer South Ostrobothnia, a district considered to be the most suitable as a base. It has already been mentioned that a large proportion of the sixty-two Jägers who had returned to Finland were at work in South Ostrobothnia. In addition, there was a joint central command there with the chief of the district, Major-General Paul von Gerich, at its head. Apart from the fact that the keenness of the South Ostrobothnians themselves was a great advantage for any military action begun in such modest circumstances, the geographical position of South Ostrobothnia permitted direct communication with foreign countries and its large supplies simplified the feeding of an army.

The War of Independence was therefore to open with the conquest of South Ostrobothnia, and the first task would be to disarm its numerous Russian garrisons. The success of such an action would mean that the base area would be cleared of enemies, and at the same time the weapons taken from the Russians would be considerable and valuable.

When General Mannerheim arrived at Vaasa he had no intention of delivering an immediate blow. On the contrary, he anticipated a few weeks' respite in which to prepare for military operations. To begin with, it was of the utmost importance that the Civic Guards districts and the individual fighting organizations should be brought into closer contact, both with each other and with the headquarters of the Commander-in-Chief. The latter at once established relations with the Civic Guards dis-

## FIRST OPERATIONS AND FORMATION OF FRONT

tricts, and written notices were sent to those officers in different parts of the country who had belonged to the old Finnish Army, disbanded in 1901, urging them to present themselves in Vaasa and place themselves at the disposal of headquarters. The call was obeyed by large numbers and the efficiency of the troops improved in every way. At the same time the Commander-in-Chief was able to investigate in fuller detail the position in South Ostrobothnia.

While these preparations were in progress alarming news was received from the south. On the 19th-20th January an encounter had occurred between the whites and the reds in Viipuri, the consequence of which might prove serious, and there were reports of armed clashes at other places. On the night of the 23rd-24th there was a serious encounter in Vaasa between Russian soldiers and Civic Guards. As a result the Commander-in-Chief despatched a letter on the 24th to the head of the Government outlining his plan "to restore order". In this General Mannerheim proposed that both the return of the Jägers and the supply of arms should be expedited in order to make it possible to answer force by force, and he demanded measures to prevent the transport of fresh Russian troops to Finland, e.g. by suspending traffic on the Viipuri-Petrograd railway. The Commander-in-Chief emphasized that when resolute action was needed "the rapid intervention of a small force may save the situation."

On the morning of the 25th the Commander-in-Chief held a council of war at headquarters. The discussion centred on two telephone messages from the Senate in Helsinki. According to one, the chairman of the so-called regional committee of the Russian troops had declared that the Russians considered it their duty to support by



*(above)* RUSSIAN AND RED TROOPS FRATERNISE AT TERIJOKI  
*(below)* RUSSIANS TAKEN PRISONERS AT LAIHIA

#### THE PLAN OF THE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF

all available means the revolution which had just broken out in Finland. The other message merely contained a reply to a former question, the Government stating that it had no means of preventing Russian military transports to Ostrobothnia.

Large Russian forces could therefore reach South Ostrobothnia at any moment, a fact which seemed to favour immediate action. But on the other hand as the efficiency of the whites was growing from day to day, and as more plentiful equipment and more Jäger officers from Germany would soon be available, it might be advisable to wait and gain time.

General Mannerheim had to choose between two alternatives: cautious delay or bold action. To "wait until the position is clear" usually means in war that the enemy takes the initiative, and in this case the danger was perfectly obvious. On the other hand, as the Commander-in-Chief had written only the day before, "the rapid intervention of a small force may save the situation."

The Commander-in-Chief decided to strike as soon as the troops had been concentrated. On the 25th he issued his first order for action, to the effect that on the night of the 27th-28th the Russian garrisons in South Ostrobothnia were to be surprised and disarmed.

In the meantime the rising had already begun in Carelia. The licence exercised by the reds and Russians in Viipuri had gradually become intolerable during January, and after the encounter between some Civic Guards and combined reds and Russians on the night of the 19th-20th, a committee, composed of bourgeois patriotic elements, decided to use the local Civic Guards in Viipuri to seize power from the reds. This move failed, owing to

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the superiority of the reds and Russians, and without becoming involved in an engagement, the whites abandoned Viipuri and withdrew to the islands to the south-west.

This prelude was not promising, the storm troops of Carelia being temporarily moved at a very critical moment. The reverse, however, did not paralyse the "Viipuri staff", and their activities were increased when the Jäger von Hägglund, on the 23rd, was appointed by headquarters to act as chief of the Viipuri Civic Guards District. He concentrated the main body of the available forces at Antrea, and ordered the detachment which had retired to the Viipuri archipelago to join him by making a detour to the east of Viipuri. Orders were also issued for the destruction of the railway bridge at Kiviniemi, on the railway running parallel to the western shore of Lake Ladoga, and for the concentration of the armed Civic Guards who still remained in those districts. This bridge was blown up on the 25th and detachments of Civic Guards were able to repulse an attack across the frontier at Rautu.

Rapid and independent action had in the meantime been taken at Sortavala. The disarming of the small Russian detachment in this town, begun on the evening of the 23rd January, was completed during the following day. On the 25th the Russian detachment in Joensuu was also disarmed. More important was the action taken in the Vuoksi district on the 25th and 26th. On the night of the 26th a detachment of Civic Guards disarmed the Russians at Antrea, and on the next day the naval detachment at Vuoksenniska, considerable booty being captured. These coups were carried out just in time, for the Russians had already decided to give equipment and supplies to the reds. In this manner the Carelians secured arms, of which

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there had hitherto been a great shortage, and the leaders of the Civic Guards lost no time in equipping fresh troops.

In obedience to Hägglund's orders, the detachment on the islands, numbering about two hundred men, had meanwhile begun its march. On the 29th it reached Antrea safely, after fighting two engagements with the reds when crossing the Viipuri-Petrograd railway.

Although the original object of the expedition to Viipuri was not attained, it proved to be of exceptional importance as it gave the whites the initiative and a moral advantage from the outset. Without it they would have found it impossible to remain on the Vuoksi, and the reds, who feared the activities of the whites and believed the exaggerated rumours of their strength, now allowed them to remain within a few days' march of, and a direct threat to, the Petrograd railway.

The events in Carelia made a profound impression throughout the country. The Ostrobothnians were burning with impatience, and the decision of the Commander-in-Chief to strike on the night of the 27th-28th was therefore taken at the correct psychological moment. The South Ostrobothnians were already on the move, and by the evening of the 27th the concentration ordered two days previously by the Commander-in-Chief was completed. The intention was that on the night of the 28th, simultaneously throughout the whole of South Ostrobothnia, the Russian garrisons should be surprised and disarmed. The largest garrison, 1,500-2,000 men, was stationed in Vaasa; in Kokkola there were 700 men; in Seinäjoki, 550; in Lapua, 370; in Ilmajoki, 350; in Ylistaro, 340; in Kaskinen and Kristiinankaupunki, together, 330; in Pietarsaari, 180; in Uusikaarlepyy, 100; in

## FIRST OPERATIONS AND FORMATION OF FRONT

Laihia and Vähäkyrö, 70 each. In addition there were smaller detachments in several places along the coast. The Russian troops were well provided with machine guns and even possessed artillery, and in Ostrobothnia they had not been so influenced by the revolution as their comrades in South Finland. There was still some discipline among them, though it had relaxed.

Insufficiently trained and armed, the peasants of South Ostrobothnia were called upon to attack the fully armed, experienced and numerically greatly superior Russians. Even the boldest might have hesitated, but in the prevailing circumstances risks were justified and it was imperative to rely on factors not easily assessed, such as the enthusiasm and determination of men fighting to free their country. It is not surprising, however, that many considered the attempt foredoomed to failure. General Mannerheim fully realized the situation. He believed that by waiting nothing was to be gained and that he might lose the initiative. He accepted the responsibility himself, for he did not possess official sanction for carrying out his far-reaching decision. On the contrary, during those anxious days there prevailed among the governmental and military authorities divergent opinions about the situation, the Senate in Helsinki striving to the last by means of negotiation and compromise to prevent any outbreak of war. Finally it tried to influence the Commander-in-Chief to postpone action, in fact, it forbade him to begin operations, but by this time the limits of diplomacy had been passed, and the moment for military action had arrived. In such circumstances only a soldier and commander fully conscious of his responsibility could decide what was to be done. The Commander-in-Chief was well aware that the enterprise might fail, with fatal consequences for the

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War of Independence. No commander could have had a heavier responsibility to shoulder.

The selection of the night of the 27th-28th January to begin operations proved to be well timed both from a military and psychological point of view. Delay would have been fatal, and the keenness and impatience of the men for action was to develop unforeseen resources of strength.

The troops were assembled in accordance with the orders of the Commander-in-Chief. Before the attack telephone and railway connections between the different enemy garrisons were to be interrupted, and their scattered forces were to be surprised and prevented from co-operating in any way.

At 7 p.m. on the 27th the first shots were fired in Laihia. Surprise failed, and the Russians were only disarmed after a fight in which the Laihia Civic Guards lost five men. In Lapua and Seinäjoki, however, where Major-General von Gerich was in command, the surprise was a complete success. The attack was launched at 2 a.m. on the 28th at Lapua and within a couple of hours the white Finns had disarmed nearly 400 troops and their officers. From Lapua the main force proceeded to Seinäjoki, and here too the Civic Guards gained a complete victory without a shot being fired on either side. The booty secured was very large, consisting, among other material, of over two thousand rifles and a number of trench mortars and machine guns. At Ylistaro the Civic Guards and the Vöyri school also succeeded in disarming the Russians without a fight, whilst at Ilmajoki there was a parley, which also ended on the morning of the 29th, after the Civic Guards had threatened to attack, with the capitulation of the Russians.

Vaasa was conquered in the course of the 28th without

## FIRST OPERATIONS AND FORMATION OF FRONT

much fighting, thanks to the leadership of Colonel Wetzer. At Uusikaarlepyy and its vicinity the Russians did not attempt any resistance, but in Pietarsaari both they and the reds only surrendered after a struggle.

Thus a decision was reached in South Ostrobothnia on the 28th, and it was not materially affected by the fact that the Russian garrisons at Kokkola, Kaskinen and Kristiian-kaupunki were still under arms. These were disarmed during the next few days, a sharp fight taking place both in Kokkola and Kristiian-kaupunki.

By the 31st January the whole of South Ostrobothnia was in the hands of the whites. Five thousand Russians had been disarmed and the booty captured included 8,000 rifles, 34 machine guns, 4 trench mortars, 37 guns and large quantities of ammunition and other supplies. It was impossible, however, to distribute the arms in a normal manner, because as a rule the Civic Guards simply retained the arms they had captured. But, at all events, the Ostrobothnian Civic Guards were now sufficiently equipped and the military authorities could raise fresh detachments of troops. This was essential, as the conquered area had to be protected against attacks from the south, and both North Ostrobothnia and Savo required assistance. Nor were the South Ostrobothnians given time to rest on their laurels.

Although Finland's War of Independence first broke into flame in Carelia, and January 28th is the historic date on which it actually began, the Commander-in-Chief's order on that day being not only the signal for the Ostrobothnians to rid their homesteads of foreign troops, but also to assemble all available forces to deliver the first great and sudden blow, these events were only a prelude to a deliberate enterprise of vast scope to come.

Military history of war provides many examples of the almost magical effect of sudden surprise in situations where the issue has seemed predetermined by the relative numerical strength of the opposing sides. The first phase of Finland's War of Independence offers a splendid example. In one night men, as if conjured up from the wintry snowdrifts, at Laihia, Lapua, Seinäjoki, Ylistaro, Vaasa, Ilmajoki and other districts in South and Central Ostrobothnia disarmed the troops of a foreign power. It was owing to the complete success of these daring surprises that serious loss of life was avoided. The first sudden blow had a paralysing effect upon the enemy: the revolutionaries being forced on to the defensive at a moment when by quick and energetic action they might have spread the revolutionary conflagration northwards. It also resulted in the despatch by the commander of the Russian army corps of an order from Viipuri to remove all detachments to South-East Finland, as he feared they might be taken by surprise in the same way as the garrisons in Ostrobothnia. Although the divisional commander, Colonel Michail Stepanovitch Svetchnikoff, refused to carry out this order, which from a Russian point of view was very ill-advised, its contents became known to the men, and this naturally made it all the more difficult for Svetchnikoff to organize his regiments for the offensive.

Thus the sudden armed rising in Ostrobothnia turned out to have far-reaching effects: it made the Russian and revolutionary authorities hesitate, and the whites gained the time needed to consolidate their first victories.

Finland, condemned to death, was aroused and had dealt her first blow.

*The First Military Actions in Central Finland,  
Savo and North Ostrobothnia*

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At the outbreak of the War of Independence there were no Russian garrisons worthy of mention in Central Finland or Savo, but the reds were in a strong position in those districts. Varkaus was their centre, and there were strong detachments of red guards at the Juva works and in the neighbourhood of Kuopio. On the Jyväskylä–Pieksämäki railway, which had only been opened in January and where work was still in progress, a great number of the labourers were red.

During the preparations in South Ostrobothnia the Commander-in-Chief had paid attention to the Haapavesi–Pieksämäki railway, the supreme importance of which for future operations was obvious, but as the outbreak of hostilities came unexpectedly he had to be content with giving orders to the Civic Guards of Central Finland and to Savo to safeguard this important section of the line. For this purpose, the chiefs of the Jyväskylä and Kuopio districts ordered a concentration of the Civic Guards under their command at Jyväskylä, Kuopio and Mikkeli.

By their energetic action the Civic Guards forced the red guards at Mikkeli to lay down their arms without resistance. The small Russian garrison at Jyväskylä also capitulated without a fight on the 1st February, but at Kuopio a very critical situation had to be faced owing to the great superiority of the reds both in numbers and weapons. Fortunately the reds did not act with sufficient



(above) THE RUSSIAN COLONEL SVETCHNIKOV  
(below) RUSSIANS RETURNING TO THEIR COUNTRY

energy, and the whites, securing reinforcements from Ostrobothnia, forced the enemy to capitulate on the 9th February.

The events at Kuopio are indicative of conditions at the outbreak of the War of Independence. As already stated, the reds were better armed and superior in numbers, but they had no determined and competent leaders under whom they might have turned their advantage to good account.

In North Ostrobothnia there were approximately 3,000 Russian troops at the end of January. About 1,000 men were stationed at Oulu; at Tornio there was a battalion, at Kemi half a battalion and three squadrons, besides which there were some smaller detachments at Raahe and along the frontier. The red guards in North Ostrobothnia were strong and well armed; for instance the red guard in Oulu amounted to about 700 men, of whom about 500 were fully armed.

The Civic Guards, on the other hand, were weak both in numbers and in arms, but were well trained and organized. As an example, the 300 Civic Guards of Oulu only possessed 90 rifles and 15,000 cartridges, their equipment being supplemented by a few dozen shot-guns, sporting guns, small arms and a few hand-grenades; their morale, however, was excellent and there was no lack of enthusiasm nor of hatred of the Russians.

The chances of a white rising in North Ostrobothnia therefore seemed anything but favourable, but as it was necessary to protect the rear of the white army and establish railway communication with the outer world, swift action here, too, was considered essential. The Commander-in-Chief accordingly telegraphed to all the Civic Guards in North Ostrobothnia immediately after the

## FIRST OPERATIONS AND FORMATION OF FRONT

victories of the 28th January, urging them to demand that the Russians and the reds should surrender their arms.

A beginning was made at Liminka, south of Oulu, and after receiving 15 rifles from Oulu, the local Civic Guards succeeded, without firing a shot, in disarming the Russian detachment of 50 men. The booty amounted to between 100 and 200 rifles and about 10,000 cartridges.

With the arms captured at Liminka the Oulu Civic Guards were in a position to take action by the 30th January. The start was auspicious, for a couple of Russian detachments were surrounded and delivered up their arms. There was then a brief exchange of shots with the main force of 700 men, housed in barracks to the north of the town, and in a short time a truce was effected, the Russians opening negotiations with the Civic Guards. They appeared to have no wish whatever to fight; on the contrary, under the influence of their "counter-revolutionary officers", they decided to hoist the white flag and surrender. Unfortunately representatives of the red guards succeeded in upsetting this decision to capitulate, with the result that the Russians broke off negotiations with the Civic Guards and began to distribute arms to the reds. A fight could no longer be avoided.

The Civic Guards of Oulu had, of course, small hope of defeating such a much more numerous enemy. They therefore asked for help from the south, and meanwhile withdrew to the north-eastern part of the town, where they entrenched themselves among some brick houses. The reds, who, in addition to Russian support, had received large reinforcements, launched an attack against the whites on the evening of the 2nd February. The whites defended themselves stubbornly and effectively against superior numbers. A Russian sailor, assisted by the reds,

threw an incendiary bomb into the telephone station, which caught fire, and soon the whole quarter of the town was in flames. The struggle lasted all night in the burning town, but the Civic Guards still held their ground.

Reinforcements, with artillery, despatched by the Commander-in-Chief, were already on the way to Oulu. Led by Captain H. Ignatius, the relief expedition reached the village of Kiviniemi, six kilometres south of the town, during the night of 2nd-3rd February.

At 9 a.m. on the 3rd February artillery opened fire for the first time in the army of independent Finland. It was directed by Colonel V. P. Nenonen, and soon columns of smoke from the region of the Russian barracks gave evidence of the first hits. Ignatius now gave the order to attack. In the course of the previous day he had received further reinforcements and had fully 1,600 men, 14 machine guns and 4 guns at his disposal. The attacking troops entered the town at various points. Opposition was strong, but the whites pushed forward street by street. When Ignatius finally sent forward his reserves the resistance of the enemy was broken, though the main force of the Russians, which had entrenched in the barracks, did not capitulate till late that night.

At Oulu the white troops had had their first experience of an exacting attack, and the courage and energy they displayed deserve the highest praise.

A few days later a decision by battle was also obtained at Kemi and Tornio, both places falling into the hands of the whites. In this way the rear of the white army was secured and railway communication with Sweden established, but in the south the enemy continued to harass the weak covering troops of the whites, and the focal point of the struggle now became Vilppula.

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*The Outbreak of the Red Rising  
The Plans of the Reds and Russians*

The red guard was, like the Civic Guards, in its early stage of organization, and its leaders had no very clear idea of the forces at their disposal, nor could they give definite instructions for co-ordinated action; the various detachments therefore had to act independently in accordance with local conditions. Strategically, the attention of the leaders centred chiefly on Helsinki, where the real decision was expected to take place. It was believed that the whites intended to concentrate large forces in the capital, but the red guards felt confident of victory, as they had ten of their best battalions there, amounting to 4,500 men, and they could, in addition, count on the assistance of other red guards in the neighbourhood.

During the 27th the Helsinki red guards were assembled in the working-class quarter of the city, and on the morning of the 28th they made their way to the centre. However, the situation did not develop according to expectation. Relying on their superior strength, the reds had intended to stage a thorough clean-up of white elements in the capital, and a similar performance was planned in other places though on a more modest scale, but nothing came of it, as they were able to occupy the capital in South Finland without the slightest resistance. The revolutionary camp was both disappointed and puzzled by this bloodless victory, and the fruits of victory were somewhat soured by the fact that the arrest of the members of the Government could not be carried out as

#### THE OUTBREAK OF THE RED RISING

planned. Four Ministers had left Helsinki and reached South Ostrobothnia on the 28th, and the others could not be found, despite a keen search. Although this was a disappointment, a greater still was in store, for on the evening of the 28th the first news was received in Helsinki of the surprise attacks by the Civic Guards on the Russian garrisons in South Ostrobothnia, and on the morning of the 29th came General Mannerheim's first report of the disarming of the 5,000 Russians. While this information may have created some uneasiness in the minds of the revolutionary leaders, they were still dazzled by the seemingly successful prelude to the revolution, and considered victory to be certain. They were of course unable to estimate the military prospects, but believed that the co-operation of the Social Democrats with the red guards would ensure success.

Of the fourteen members of "Finland's People's Commissaries", formed on the 29th January, seven were moderate Social Democrats, and the Social Democratic Party as a whole joined the revolution. The chairman of the "People's Commissaries" was the party leader, Kullervo Manner, and now that the red guards had taken military action, he was ready to accept the leadership of the movement. The Commander-in-Chief of the red guards was Eero Haapalainen, an ex-journalist, who, though possessing no military accomplishments, had distinguished himself as an energetic champion of revolutionary ideas. The former supreme commander of the red guards, Ali Aaltonen, who had served in the Russian Army and attained in it the rank of officer, taking part in the Russo-Japanese War, was appointed Chief of the General Staff.

Any satisfaction which the revolutionary leaders may

## FIRST OPERATIONS AND FORMATION OF FRONT

have felt with the course of events was soon shattered, for, added to the discomforting news from Ostrobothnia, disturbing reports came from South Finland, and even from the immediate neighbourhood of Helsinki itself. These rumours affected the morale not only of the leaders, but also of the rank and file, and this depressing outlook should be taken into account when reading the report on the general position and the plan of campaign submitted by the Chief of the General Staff, Ali Aaltonen, to the People's Commissaries on the 31st January. The plan of campaign was to be defensive in character, Aaltonen assuming that, after their successes in North Finland, the whites would immediately start an offensive southwards. In his opinion the reds should therefore organize a defensive front in the north at once, and not until this had been completed should they undertake the task of destroying the white forces in South Finland.

Aaltonen thus had a totally erroneous view of the situation and did not in the least appreciate the fact that in comparison with their opponents the reds possessed a considerable superiority. Nor did he realize that the situation demanded a swift attack by the main forces of the red guards in the direction of the Ostrobothnian railway. His attention and Haapalainen's was directed more towards the Civic Guards in Uusimaa, who were presumed to be preparing to attack, and when on the 31st January the Civic Guards of Eastern Uusimaa actually did attack Kerava, the Commander-in-Chief and Chief of the General Staff of the red guards came to a decision which had far-reaching consequences for the future conduct of the war. Their decision was to concentrate at once the forces at their disposal in South Finland against the Civic Guards of Uusimaa.

#### THE OUTBREAK OF THE RED RISING

At the same time as the supreme command of the reds in Helsinki was starting to clear up South Finland, the chief of the "Army of West Finland", Colonel Michail Stepanovitch Svetchnikoff, was planning an attack from Tampere on South Ostrobothnia, the heart of white Finland.

Of the Russian detachments stationed in Finland, the 42nd Army Corps was the largest, but at the outbreak of the War of Independence it was already appreciably reduced. Its main body consisted of the 106th Infantry Division, the staff of which was stationed in Tampere. Colonel Svetchnikoff himself was the commander of this division, which comprised four regiments: the Tsarskoye Selo Regiment (No. 421) at Rauma, the Kolpana Regiment (No. 422) at Tampere, the Tchoudi Regiment (No. 424) at Riihimäki and Hämeenlinna, and the Luga Regiment (No. 432) at Seinäjoki. The detachments had elected their own commanders, though they were more or less dependent on the Soldiers' Council, and discipline was so relaxed that it scarcely existed. Men went "on leave" at will, ignoring the protests of the council and the committees, and the number available at any time for active operation was therefore largely a matter for conjecture.

The total strength of the Russian forces in Finland, including smaller detachments such as the 40th Regiment of Engineers at Hämeenlinna, the 92nd Territorial Brigade at Tornio, the garrisons of the towns on the coast, the coastal artillery, including the 8,000 of the Baltic fleet at Helsinki, amounted roughly to about 40,000 men at the outbreak of the War of Independence.

The disarmament of the Russian troops in Carelia and Ostrobothnia resulted in a declaration of war by the com-

mittee of the 42nd Army Corps on the Civic Guards, and also in a proclamation that the Russians would unhesitatingly defend their comrades, the Finnish Social Democrats. Colonel Svetchnikoff was the first to translate speech into action and began to prepare for an offensive against the whites. This, however, was no easy task, because the greater part of the Russian garrison at Tampere considered that they ought not to intervene in the Finnish civil war. Besides, the reports of the fate of the Luga Regiment at Seinäjoki were calculated to damp the ardour of the Russians, especially as rumour had it that the whites shot all their Russian prisoners. Svetchnikoff says: "The position was further complicated, when the chief of the garrison received a telegram from Mannerheim, in which the latter guaranteed the safety of the Russians, provided that they refrained from interfering in Finnish affairs."

Nevertheless, Svetchnikoff was of the opinion, as he himself relates, that the Russians neither should nor could remain passive. The Tampere garrison must not be exposed to the same fate as the Russian troops in Ostrobothnia, and it seemed to him that a united front with the Finnish workmen in the struggle against the whites was the best way of avoiding such a catastrophe. He therefore began preparations for an offensive, for which the Tampere red guards were placed under his command, in addition to his own Russian troops.

Svetchnikoff's offensive had scarcely started, on the 2nd February, when the commander and committee of the 42nd Army Corps intervened. The chief of the Army Corps, General Nadezhny, on whom the events in Ostrobothnia had made a profound impression, had succeeded in persuading the committee of the army corps that the 106th Division ought to be transferred to Viipuri, if it



THE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF IN THE WAR OF INDEPENDENCE

#### THE PLANS OF THE REDS AND RUSSIANS

was to be saved at all. Svetchnikoff was thereupon given a categorical order to abandon Tampere and Pori, and to move his troops to Viipuri.

There were many weighty objections to such a measure from the Russian point of view and Svetchnikoff decided to ignore it. In this he was supported by Poznansky, the representative of the Foreign Commissariat of the Russian Bolshevik Government, by whose influence Svetchnikoff had been appointed by the regional committee of the Russian troops to be chief of the "Army of West Finland". Svetchnikoff carried on with his plan to invade South Ostrobothnia and crush the white forces there, and his initial attacks led to serious encounters at Vilppula and Ruovesi during the first week in February, which will be referred to later.

Svetchnikoff made no secret of his intention to reconquer Finland, and this undoubtedly was in accordance with the objects of the Russian Bolshevik Government. Lenin himself had said in a speech that it would be necessary to do so, and although Russia took no part officially in the war between the Finnish whites and reds, the Bolsheviks endeavoured as long as possible to support the latter in their revolution.

It has been argued that with the help of the Russians the reds were fighting for democracy in Finland, but nothing could be further from the truth. It is contradicted by the testimony of red authors themselves: O.W. Kausinen, for instance, a member of the People's Commissaries in Finland, mentions in his study, *The Revolution in Finland*, that "on that day in January on which the workman raised his hand against his deadly enemy, he cast aside the last rags of democracy. Since that day the enforcement of the democratic programme has meant an unconscious

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set-back". This was a revolution, the object of which was the dictatorship of the proletariat. The excitable and misguided Finnish workmen thus fought in reality against all true democracy, although many among them believed that they were fighting "for democracy" and "against reaction".

The Finnish reds, the majority of whom were honest and capable workmen, were unquestionably inspired by the conviction that they were fighting in a just cause, and it is impossible to condone the crime of the agitators whose propaganda caused this profound and shocking tragedy.

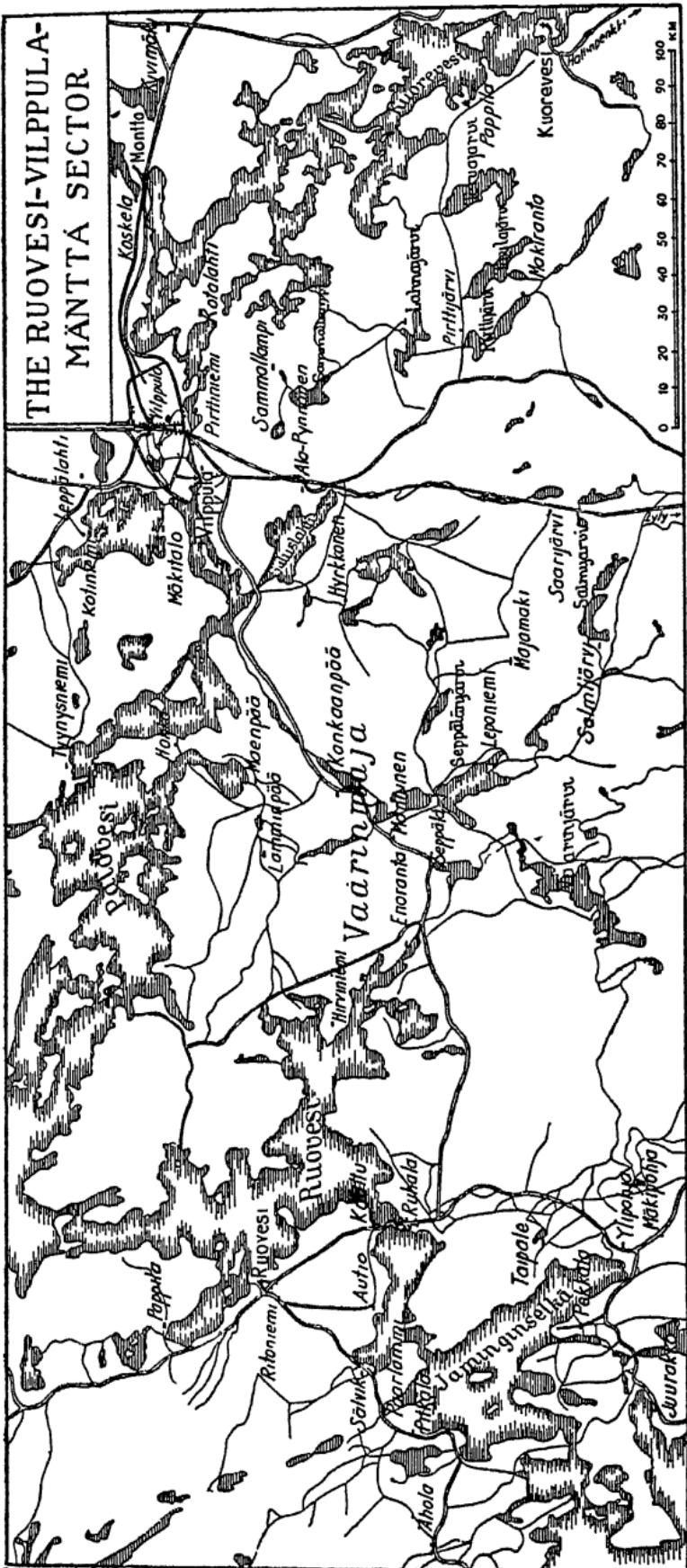
### *Safeguarding the Base Area of the Whites Forming the Front. Häme*

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(See map on page 63)

The white base area in South Ostrobothnia having been secured, it was essential to lose no time in safeguarding it to the south by removing the danger that threatened Haapamäki, the western terminus of the railway connecting Carelia with Ostrobothnia, for it was to be expected that the enemy would first of all attempt to seize this important place in order to sever connections between West and South Finland. As soon as the Russian garrisons in South Ostrobothnia had been disarmed further blows were therefore struck. On the 30th January a group of ten Civic Guards, boldly taking the initiative, occupied the railway station at Haapamäki and expelled a troop of

## THE RUOVESI-VILPPULA-MÄNTÄ SECTOR



## FIRST OPERATIONS AND FORMATION OF FRONT

about eighty red guards. On receiving reinforcements the whites also occupied Vilppula, and at the same time the adjacent mill district of Mänttä fell into their hands.

This protective action in the direction of Tampere came only just in time, for on the 2nd February Svetchnikoff launched his first attack on Vilppula. According to his own statement the Russians and reds numbered about 1,000, with 10 machine guns and 2 field guns. The defenders of Vilppula did not exceed 200, and of their two machine guns one was permanently out of action, while the other had no gun carriage. In spite of this the attack was repulsed, and the famous "Vilppula front" was established.

During the following night the whites received reinforcements: 200 infantry with 4 machine guns and 20 mounted men. In addition 4 light Danish machine guns were obtained. The troops could not, however, be concentrated at Vilppula, but had to be spread over a wide front to prevent the enemy from outflanking them. From the 3rd to the 5th February they successfully repulsed renewed attacks by the enemy.

On the 5th February the Commander-in-Chief placed Colonel Wetzer in command of the white forces operating in North Häme, and on the 6th the whites at Vilppula received a further valuable contribution: two 7.62-cm. Russian field guns of the new type and a fairly large supply of gun ammunition to add to the two old-fashioned guns, which previously had been their total artillery.

The men on the Vilppula front now awaited the enemy's attack in a more confident mood. It took place on the 7th February, but the superiority of the Russians and reds was even greater than on the previous occasion: 1,300 men, 9 machine guns, 3 3-inch and 4 9-inch guns and an

armoured train being thrown into the struggle. The white machine guns and the artillery were, however, so skilfully managed and developed such effective fire that all the enemy's attacks were repulsed with heavy loss.

A defensive force of 100 men was stationed at Mänttä on the west flank of the Vilppula front. This sector of the front had so far been quiet, mainly because the distance from the red base was so great as to preclude any serious attacks, and this gave the whites time to organize. Further east the whites, numbering about 300-400 men in the middle of February, had occupied Jämsä on the initiative of the commander of the Jyväskylä district and had pushed forward a few miles in a south-westerly and southerly direction. Thus the important east flank of the Vilppula front was protected.

It would be wrong to imagine this front as a connected line of positions. The available forces would not have sufficed for this, nor were connected positions necessary in view of the enemy's situation. The latter had not sufficiently large detachments of men on skis to justify any fear of flanking movements through the snow-covered woods in the country between the white points of concentration. Operations were confined to regions near the railway and the high roads, the centre of operations being Vilppula, where the whites had assembled their largest forces.

It may be mentioned that the defensive positions of the whites were mostly *south* of the waterways between Vilppula and Ruovesi. Tactical considerations, however, were not the deciding factor in selecting positions, but rather the problem of providing quarters and food. The primary consideration in any operation is to keep the troops in fighting trim, and for this reason purely tactical

## FIRST OPERATIONS AND FORMATION OF FRONT

considerations had to be relegated to the background.

Nevertheless the siting of the positions south of the waterways had certain indirect tactical advantages. The enemy's facilities for quartering and feeding his troops south of the white positions were very poor. A large proportion of the red and Russian troops engaged on the Ruovesi-Vilppula front was housed in goods trucks on sidings at the stations of Lly and Korkeakoski, so that the red quarters were far removed from the white positions, a fact which usually resulted in the reds giving up at night whatever ground they had gained during the day. Another reason that the whites moved their positions as far south as possible was their anxiety to release the centres of population situated there from red occupation.

During the first week in February Colonel Svetchnikoff had received considerable reinforcements: parts of the Tsarskoye Selo Regiment at Rauma, an armoured train, 250 Anarchist sailors from the Baltic Fleet and detachments of red guards from various places. Having realized that the Vilppula front could not be broken by frontal attack alone, Svetchnikoff decided to detach appreciable forces for an attack from Kuru on Ruovesi. From Ruovesi the offensive was to be carried on to Haapamäki and was to be supported by a further frontal attack at Vilppula. For this purpose 650 men, 4 guns and 3 machine guns were concentrated at Kuru. Only about a hundred Finnish reds belonged to this detachment, the remainder being Russians formed round a nucleus of "black guards", as the Anarchist sailors were called.

The march to Ruovesi started on the 12th February, contact being established with the whites on that same day. On the following day the storm broke in grim earnest. The Russians attacked in large, closely formed

masses, but the Finns gave them a warm reception and succeeded by means of a counter-attack in frustrating their efforts to outflank them. Time after time the Russians were beaten back, and at dusk they finally withdrew.

Farther west, at Pekkala and Ylä-Pohja, more severe fighting had occurred on these same days. Here the "black guard" was engaged, and the whites were gradually forced back by weight of superior numbers on to their only line of retreat, which lay across open country exposed to the enemy's fire. But when the situation seemed to be most hopeless the dramatic intervention of a machine gun, which was trained effectively on the advancing Russians, changed the situation, and their ranks began to yield. Seizing this opportunity the whites immediately launched a counter-attack, and panic took hold of the enemy, who fled in confusion. As a result of this experience the Anarchist sailors took no further part in any battles in Finland, and returned to Russia. The frontal attack on Vilppula never materialized, because the whites destroyed a railway bridge which was essential for the concentration of the red and Russian troops. In this way the dangerous enemy offensive had been warded off. The battle at Ruovesi was followed both there and at Vilppula by a period of calm which was utilized for improving organization and for the intensive training of the troops.

*Satakunta*

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(See map on page 91)

A concentration of the Civic Guards had been under-

## FIRST OPERATIONS AND FORMATION OF FRONT

taken in Satakunta at the same time as in Häme, but the formation of the front had not developed so rapidly.

At the outbreak of war Kankaanpää became the centre for the Civic Guards, who poured in from all sides. In the middle of February the white force at Kankaanpää numbered about 500 under Lieut.-Colonel Walter Bergh and was organized by him into a battalion and a separate company. Fortunately for the whites, the reds here too, had no idea either of the actual resources or of the position of the enemy. They allowed three valuable weeks to elapse without a single serious attempt at an offensive, whilst the whites made several raids, which, if they had no great results, at least enabled them to retain the initiative.

## *Savo*

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(See map on page 95)

Although the red guards in Mikkeli had surrendered their arms to the whites on the 29th January, the position in Savo seemed serious during the first week in February. The events in Kuopio have already been referred to, the fighting there continuing till the 8th February. At that time Varkaus was red, so that the rear of the whites was threatened, while the reds simultaneously started an offensive from the south, from Kouvolan. There was also the probability of a red advance from Lappeenranta.

The actions of the whites were characterized by boldness, their object being to prevent the initiative passing into the hands of the numerically stronger and better

equipped enemy. Two bridges on the railway leading to Kouvola were blown up; the Russian garrison at Savitapale was disarmed, 18,000 kg. of explosives being taken, besides other booty; surprise attacks were launched against the reds, misleading them and causing them to hesitate and lose time, and on the 31st January a red sortie from Varkaus towards Pieksämäki was repulsed. The attention of the whites was, of course, directed mainly to the south, in the direction of Kouvola. On the 2nd February Mäntyharju station was occupied, 25 miles from Mikkeli and 44 miles from Kouvola.

Led by a conscripted company of Latvians and supported by an armoured train, the superior enemy forces attacked Mäntyharju on the 7th February. The whites, after a desperate fight, had to fall back in the evening. On the 11th February the attack was renewed on the white positions, but this time it was repulsed. The Latvians lost 16 killed, and after this engagement, having had enough of the war in Finland, they left the country.

The Commander-in-Chief now proceeded to take the necessary steps to make secure the position in Savo. Major-General Ernst Löfström was given the command of the white forces operating between Lake Päijänne and Lake Saimaa, and considerable reinforcements were despatched to the front north of Mäntyharju.

On the 14th February a white offensive was started with 1,400 men against Mäntyharju, which was again occupied.

*Carelia*

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(See map on page 95)

The white forces to the south of the River Vuoksi represented a serious threat to the main artery of the Russian troops, the Viipuri-Petrograd railway, and it was therefore obvious that the Russians and the reds would make strenuous efforts to capture the line of the Vuoksi. The principal base on this front was, of course, Viipuri, and the distance from there to Antrea was only 20 miles. As the enemy had two high roads at his disposal in addition to the railway, the sector at Antrea was considered the most likely objective of his anticipated offensive. The Kiviniemi sector was also a possible objective, as another railway, the important Petrograd-Hiitola line, and several roads ran through it. The bridge at Kiviniemi was partly destroyed, as already stated, but the defence there only amounted to about 60 men, and on the line from Lappeenranta to Imatra the enemy would be able to use the road running along the shore of Lake Saimaa.

When the troops which had been detached for the unsuccessful expedition to Viipuri reached Antrea, there were altogether 950 Civic Guards on the Carelian front. The main body of this force was retained in the Antrea-Kavantsaari district, while a smaller part was distributed at Vuoksenniska, Imatra, Enso and Jääski. Screens of troops pushed out along the roads to Viipuri and Lappeenranta, and the possession of that important bridge-head was thus to some extent secured.



TWO LIGHT INFANTRY OFFICERS: HAGGLUND AND SIHVO

On the 2nd February Jäger Captain Aarne Sihvo arrived at Antrea, and on the following day, by order of the Commander-in-Chief, he took over the command of the white troops on the Carelian front. The Carelians thereby secured a leader who enjoyed their complete confidence, and he proved to be the right man for a difficult post. The Jäger Captain Hägglund made an excellent chief assistant for him.

The first week in February was quiet, as the enemy was not yet ready, and this respite was employed in organizing and training the troops. There was still a great shortage of arms, a fact which at first prevented any appreciable strengthening of the troops at the front.

From the 5th February onwards the outposts had minor skirmishes with the enemy, but it was not until the 11th that the Russians and the reds attacked, employing 1,000 men supported with artillery. On this day the fate of the bridge-head was at stake, but salvation came in the shape of an improvised "armoured train", an engine and a truck "armoured" by means of bricks piled up inside the wooden sides of the truck and armed with guns captured from the Russians. This "armoured train" intervened at the right moment and caused the attackers heavy loss. There was such confusion in the red-Russian ranks that the attack was repulsed and ended in a panic-stricken flight.

On the 12th February the whites made a successful counter-attack, assisted by "the saviour of Carelia", as the "armoured train" had been named, but on the following day the enemy again attacked. The whites held their ground and, in order to protect their left flank, extended their line as far as Heinjoki during the next few days.

While the above encounters were proceeding, smaller

## FIRST OPERATIONS AND FORMATION OF FRONT

Russian and red forces, starting from Lappeenranta, endeavoured to push forward to Imatra, but were beaten back without much difficulty.

Until the final stage of the war the Carelians had to contend with a more formidable opponent than anywhere else on the white army front, the enemy troops consisting chiefly of Russian detachments, including former Guards' regiments. Later, too, reinforcements and war material kept on arriving uninterruptedly from Petrograd.

The conduct of the operations of the Russians and the reds on the Carelian front was in the hands of officers of the General Staff at headquarters in Viipuri, which, in turn, was under the orders of the district staff in Petrograd, i.e. a Soviet Russian military committee which exercised a decided influence on the operations in Carelia, partly by the supply of troops and partly by its orders and instructions. Thus the whites in Carelia were fighting their historic enemy more directly than were those on any other part of the front.

Finland was now cut across by a battle-line with occasional gaps. The white base area had been cleared of enemies, Varkaus alone still forming an isolated red island in that part of the country. At first the whites had to restrict their military activities to defending the positions they had occupied and repelling the attacks of the enemy, but simultaneously an army was being created capable of undertaking an offensive. Only by offensive action could the enemy be defeated and Finland's independence gained.

Once the front had been formed the prospects of the whites improved daily in comparison with those of the reds. The whites possessed an outstanding Commander-

in-Chief, as also a number of officers capable of command, a type which is the most indispensable need of any military organization. Many officers who joined the white army had either served in the disbanded Finnish army or in the Russian forces, and, in addition, the Jägers were at its disposal, the majority of whom were still in Germany though expected to return at any moment. It was obvious that the whites had far better facilities for raising, organizing and training men and for making them thoroughly fit for service.

Among the reds, on the contrary, these conditions were conspicuous by their absence and in their war preparations they were correspondingly handicapped. Their trump card was their superiority in numbers and equipment at the outbreak of the war, and their best chance of victory lay in making early use of this advantage. But days and weeks were to pass before a great offensive was launched on the main front, a delay which was to the advantage of the whites.

## CHAPTER THREE

# THE RED OFFENSIVE

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### *The Red Army and Its Leaders*

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**A**t the outbreak of the war the red guards consisted principally of the worst elements of the working class, but later they represented the whole of that class in those parts of the country occupied by the reds. Although officially recruiting was based on voluntary enlistment, in actual fact severe and undisguised force was used and the People's Commissaries issued a decree that unorganized workmen had to join the trade unions, which were therefore able to keep forming fresh companies. A workman capable of bearing arms who refused to join the red guards was expelled from his trade union and was at the same time deprived of any chance of earning his living.

Among the red guards various companies were formed purely on a trade-union basis, such as the "railwaymen's company", the "carpenters' company", the "tailors' training company", and so on. In other words the trade unions acted as recruiting centres. The red press naturally also exercised a great influence whenever enthusiasm for the red guards had to be stimulated.

During February the numerical strength of the red

guards increased enormously, but though the supply of arms was sufficient the organization was unable to keep pace with the growth of numbers. When the revolution broke out the country was divided into twelve military districts and it was proposed, within this framework, to organize regiments, battalions and companies according to towns, parishes and villages. The smallest unit was a "section" consisting of 12 men. Two sections formed a platoon, four platoons a company—so that a company was made up of 96 men—four companies a battalion and four battalions a regiment. Larger units had also been planned: two regiments were to be combined into a brigade, two brigades into a division and four divisions into an army corps.

The organization of these larger units, however, never materialized. Regiments were indeed formed in the larger red centres, such as Helsinki, Viipuri, Turku, Tampere and Kotka, but neither they nor the battalions were of practical significance, the reason being the lack of trained officers and a competent staff, and the absence of reserve formations. Actually the company was the only battle-unit of the red army, and even its strength and organization were not uniform.

The inefficient organization and want of training were due to the absence of competent commanders. Some improvement in this respect might have been achieved if the commanding ranks had been filled by representatives of the *élite* of the working class, but unfortunately for the cause of the reds the hooligan element which had joined up at the start continued to maintain its predominant position. The only red leader who had been trained as an officer was Ali Aaltonen, already mentioned, who at first commanded the red guards and later became their

#### THE RED OFFENSIVE

chief of staff, after which he was appointed chief of the district staff in Helsinki and finally was sent to the northern front to "organize troops" there. From the first some Russian officers and N.C.O.s acted as instructors to the red guards, but the assistance they gave was not as important as is generally supposed. The language difficulty restricted their influence, besides which the red rank and file had no confidence in them. A red historian of the war states, for instance, that "the workmen were unable to shake off national prejudices" and that the old idea that "a Russian always remains a Russian" stuck stubbornly in the mind of many a workman. It is evident that in such circumstances training had to be limited to its simplest form and was chiefly restricted to practice in handling arms and ordinary drill. Training courses were arranged for officers and special units, lasting a couple of weeks. In March there was a course for the various arms in Helsinki, consisting of an infantry school, an artillery school, a machine-gun school, a cavalry school, an aviation school, and an engineers' school. The instructors in these courses were mostly Russians.

Among the special units of the red army special reference should be made to the artillery. Altogether the red guards had 100 guns, but there was a lack of gunners. The command in this arm was entirely Russian and in some batteries even the gunners were exclusively Russian. The armoured trains, about a dozen in all, were to play an important part in the red operations, but the modest air force, a few aeroplanes piloted by Russians, was of no particular value.

On the outbreak of war the red Russians had no unified command. There were three staffs in charge of the army, all working, to a great extent, independently of each other;



A RED COMMANDER

Svetchnikoff's staff at Tampere, the red general staff in Helsinki and the so-called headquarters staff at Viipuri. Svetchnikoff, whose activities have already been described, was the Commander-in-Chief both of the Russian troops in West Finland and of the red guards in the Tampere district. The red general staff was in charge of the organization of the red guards, their equipment and training. Its co-operation with Svetchnikoff was confined at first to the red general staff placing several companies at his disposal at the beginning of February. The headquarters staff at Viipuri was in command both of the red guards and of the Russian troops operating in Carelia, but it acted on instructions from the district staff in the Petrograd military district. The command was exercised by Russian officers of the General Staff, but a representative of the Finnish reds was attached to them.

On the 18th February an important political event occurred which proved a turning-point in the co-operation between the Russians and the reds in Finland. The peace negotiations between Germany and Russia were broken off, a state of war was re-opened, and the Germans decided to resume the offensive again on the Eastern Front. As the Russian army, being in a state of dissolution, was incapable of offering resistance, the Soviet Government decided to withdraw its troops from the front. Fearing a German landing in Finland it also gave orders to the detachments of troops stationed in that country to return immediately to Russia. The removal of the troops began at once and was completed within the second week in March. Only the fleet remained, being forced to stay at Helsinki owing to the ice.

In this way fear of the Germans caused official Russia to withdraw from the war in Finland, although many

#### THE RED OFFENSIVE

Russian officers, non-commissioned officers and men remained in the country, to be regarded henceforth as volunteers or as mercenaries in the service of the Finnish People's Commissaries. Friction between the Russians and the reds now ceased, and the command was henceforward consolidated primarily in Finnish hands. Eero Haapalainen, Minister for War, was appointed the Commander-in-Chief of all the red guards: Colonel Svetchnikoff acted as adjutant, his own staff becoming the General Staff of the supreme military command. During February there had been a change in the chief of the general staff of the red guards, Aaltonen having been succeeded by O. Kallio, but a month later the latter was replaced by E. Hausen, who was in turn succeeded by August Wesley.

On the day on which the Germans resumed military operations on the Eastern Front, i.e. on the 18th February, Haapalainen issued an order, dividing the front in Finland into three sectors with Lakes Päijänne and Saimaa as the boundaries. The eastern sector embraced the front between Lake Laatokka and Lake Saimaa; it was commanded by A. Backman. The middle sector extended from Lake Saimaa to Lake Päijänne with A. Hasu in command. The remaining sector, between Lake Päijänne and the Gulf of Bothnia, sometimes designated as the western and sometimes as the northern front, was given to H. Salmela. The staffs of the different sectors were stationed in Viipuri, Kouvola and Tampere respectively. The commanders of the eastern and western sectors were given Russian adjutants, Captain Vladimiroff being appointed adjutant to Backman and Colonel Bulatsel to Salmela. In the normal organization of staffs and units, a Finn was in command with a Russian adjutant and military adviser, but in some mixed Finnish-Russian detachments the

## THE RED ARMY AND ITS LEADERS

commander was a Russian. For instance, in North Häme two Russian officers, Stolboff and Sorin, were in command of two detachments, and altogether several dozen Russian officers enlisted in the service of the People's Commissaries.

At the outbreak of the war the red guards must have numbered about 30,000, of whom, however, only about 20,000 were armed. The numbers increased very rapidly and arms were supplied by the Russians in ample quantities. On the 15th April the War Department of the People's Commissaries estimated the force of the red army at 75,000 men, but by that date the northern army fighting at Tampere had already been destroyed and the red guards had suffered additional losses in killed and prisoners. The maximum number of the red troops must therefore have been approximately 100,000 men.

The red army represented an appreciable part of the Finnish nation and certainly consisted for the most part of the same splendid military material of which the white army, too, was composed. This explains why the reds, despite their poor training, their most inefficient organization and their bad leaders, showed in many battles great stubbornness and fanatic bravery. The red army was not, however, capable of improvement, owing to the lack of trained officers and of educated men. The bulk of the insurgents consisted of the proletariat, while the white army was mainly a combination of educated men and peasants.

It should be added that the red guards also included a great number of criminal and anti-social elements whom the weak leaders were unable to control and who were guilty of many atrocities.

*The Annihilation of the Uusimaa Civic Guards  
The Fighting in East Uusimaa*

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During the first ten days of the war the district round Sipoo, Porvoo and Loviisa to the east of Helsinki formed, as it were, an island in the red area. The population of these districts was mostly white and had, so far as the existing conditions permitted, prepared itself for expected red attacks from various quarters. The Civic Guards there numbered altogether about 1,300 men.

The first few days after the outbreak of the revolution were comparatively calm. The Civic Guards were entirely masters of the situation and nothing was heard of the anticipated red attack. The leaders, however, had only a hazy idea of the general position, and believed that the war would be of comparatively short duration. General Mannerheim and his victorious troops were believed to be on their way south, and in these circumstances active operations were considered essential.

At a council held on the 30th January it was decided to attack the Kerava station. Its occupation might possibly enable telephonic communication to be established with Mannerheim, and by this single stroke more precise information be obtained of the situation in the rest of the country and detailed orders received. It was reported also that there were fairly large red stores of arms at Kerava, the capture of which would mean a valuable addition to the scanty resources of the Civic Guards. Finally it was assumed that the cutting of the main line, although only

temporary, might to some extent assist the operations of General Mannerheim's troops.

At 7 a.m. on the 31st an attack was launched, but the venture proved too difficult for the poorly led and untrained troops, and after a couple of hours' fighting the whites stopped their attack and retired.

From the point of view of the Porvoo staff the effort had completely failed and its result had a depressing influence on the men. In spite of this the Kerava expedition was by no means devoid of influence on the further course of the war.

As already stated the leaders of the reds had been very nervous since the 28th January. News came in unceasingly from the north of the victories of Mannerheim's troops, in South Finland the whites seemed to be preparing to attack in various places, and also it was assumed that considerable forces were concealed in Helsinki. Then on the 31st the news of the attack on Kerava came as a thunderbolt. It was felt that this might be an important move, the prelude to operations against Helsinki. The worst fears were removed when it was heard that the whites had retired, but nevertheless the situation seemed critical. The red general staff now considered that the "crowd of butchers" in East Uusimaa constituted a grave threat to the position of the revolutionaries which must be removed before attempting anything else. A large scale enveloping movement was therefore begun against the Civic Guards of East Uusimaa. Altogether 4,000 picked red troops were engaged in this offensive, which consequently were occupied for some time in a sector actually of secondary importance, while the decision on the main front was hanging by a thread. The East Uusimaa Civic Guards had unwittingly created a very effective diversion.

#### THE RED OFFENSIVE

On the 5th February and during the following days alarming news continued to reach Porvoo. The enemy was approaching in superior numbers from all sides, and the whites therefore decided to abandon Porvoo as well as Loviisa. The leaders were panic-stricken and even disbanded the troops, but the greater part reassembled and retired to the islands at Pellinge.

On the 8th the revolutionaries occupied Porvoo and then continued their march with 1,000 men, many machine guns and artillery to Pellinge, where they made two attacks on the 11th across the frozen straits, against the defensive positions which the whites had taken up on the southern shore. On both occasions the reds were repulsed, but the white detachment, having used up all its ammunition, could resist no longer. During the night it withdrew to the west, and on the following day, the 12th February, dispersed in several directions. The greater part stayed among the islands, making their way in March over the ice-covered Gulf of Finland to Estonia, whilst the majority of the remainder, who attempted to return to Helsinki, fell into the hands of the reds and were murdered.

The red forces in South Finland were now set free and were sent to oppose the Civic Guards in West Uusimaa.

#### *The Fighting in West Uusimaa*

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After the outbreak of war two white concentration points were established in West Uusimaa: one at the castle of Svidja in Siuntio, the other at the Sigurds manor in Kirkkonummi.

#### THE FIGHTING IN WEST UUSIMAA

After successfully withstanding an enemy attack on the 10th February the Svidja detachment decided to combine with the whites at Sigurds. The combined force of Civic Guards then amounted to about 600 men, of whom only 350 were armed, and only about 200 with army rifles. The detachment was divided into three companies.

As soon as the greater part of the red forces in South Finland was released from East Uusimaa, Aaltonen decided to start another big offensive with the object of annihilating the Civic Guards of West Uusimaa. On the 16th February all the roads leading to Kirkkonummi and Siuntio were occupied, and the actual attack started on the following day. The forces engaged amounted to 3,000 men with 10 machine guns and 4 guns.

The fate of the Sigurds detachment was now sealed. They put up a stubborn defence and made some successful sorties, but by the 22nd their encirclement by the enemy was complete, and on the following day the main attack began. The whites held their ground valiantly for three days, despite the fact that hasty entrenchments were gradually entirely demolished by the enemy artillery. On the 25th 15-cm. shells began to rain down upon the positions, causing terrible destruction. As it seemed hopeless to continue the defence, it was decided at a council of war held in the evening to attempt a break-through on the following day in a southerly direction. The break-through succeeded, and a course was set for the islands, where, unhappily, an attempt to wrest the fort of Makilo from its Russian garrison failed. The reds had followed with their main force in pursuit and the whites now gave way to complete despair. Through the intermediary of the Swedish Legation they capitulated on acceptable terms, 467 surrendering, and the remainder—about 150

## THE RED OFFENSIVE

men—remaining among the islands, hiding as best they could. The prisoners were lodged in Helsinki under the supervision of the Swedish Legation.

Considering the general situation as a whole, the most important result of the fighting in Uusimaa was that the best troops of the reds were kept away from the main theatre of war throughout the month of February. The first month of the war was over and with it the period during which the reds had had their best chance of victory.

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### *The Expedition of the “Uusikaupunki Corps” to the Aland Islands*

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The detachment known by the name of the “Uusikaupunki Corps”, which was to take an active part in a very noteworthy military and political development, consisted chiefly of Civic Guards from the town of Turku and its neighbourhood. Comparatively few citizens of Uusikaupunki itself belonged to the corps, and it took its name from the fact that Uusikaupunki was its concentration point.

The concentration and organization of the detachment began at the end of January, and it was under the command of Captain J. Chr. Fabritius, the commander of the Turku Civic Guards. From the 1st February men kept pouring into Uusikaupunki from the surrounding country. In the first week alone the detachment increased to 600 men and they were divided into four companies. The intention was to create a complete fighting unit with scouts and reserves, but unfortunately they lacked



ONNI KOKKO, WHO DIED LIKE  
A HERO AT THE AGE OF FOURTEEN

#### EXPEDITION TO ALAND ISLANDS

weapons. There were only a hundred army rifles, including those of the old-fashioned Berdan type, and the supply of ammunition amounted only to about ten rounds per rifle. In addition, there was one machine gun with one cartridge belt.

Arms had to be obtained at all costs. Captain Fabritius planned two bold enterprises: with a view to disarming the Russian garrisons first at Lypertö and then at Rauma, but on the 2nd February there was a change of command. Colonel V. J. Forssell arrived at Uusikaupunki and, as senior officer, took over command of the Civic Guards, Captain Fabritius thenceforward acting as chief of staff to the new commander. The proposed enterprises were cancelled, as Colonel Forssell thought them too risky, and the Rauma Civic Guards withdrew to Uusikaupunki.

The situation of the detachment now became precarious. News was received from all quarters that strong Russian and red forces were on the move. To remain in Uusikau-punki was out of the question, and it was decided that, despite its poor armament, the corps should either attempt to fight its way northward or else march to Aland. In the end the latter alternative was chosen.

The contribution of the Uusikaupunki Corps to the War of Independence had so far consisted in distracting the attention of the enemy from Satakunta at a time when the white forces in the Turku and Pori districts were still very weak. Like the Civic Guards in Uusimaa, the Uusikaupunki Corps had unconsciously created an important diversion.

On the 9th February the detachment, about 600 strong with 100 army rifles, reached Aland after an exhausting march in a snowstorm. Before leaving Uusikaupunki it was believed that only a few hundred Russians remained

#### THE RED OFFENSIVE

in Aland, but it was now discovered that their number was about 1,000. However, as the disarming of the Russians in Ostrobothnia had begun in still more adverse circumstances the situation was considered by no means hopeless. After a dispute with his men Colonel Forssell, who was over cautious, had resigned, and Fabritius, who was bolder and more determined, was again given command. He based his plans on surprise. As a beginning the Russian signalling stations had to be captured, and then the enemy troops stationed in the north-eastern part of the main island of Aland were to be rendered harmless. After the conquest of this "base area" the main attack against Mariehamn was to be launched.

The operations began auspiciously on the 14th February, and at the same time an attack on the Russian positions at Godby was in preparation. On the 15th a detachment of the Civic Guards brought off a successful coup, capturing a battery of 8 field guns, and taking in addition, 90 rifles and a large supply of ammunition and stores.

The inhabitants of Aland hailed the whites from the mainland as their deliverers from the licence and terrorism of the Russians and displayed evident enthusiasm for Finland and the Civic Guards movement. Separatist tendencies were forgotten, and large numbers of them joined the white detachment, the Aland auxiliary troops amounting at one time to over 300, most of whom, however, were very badly armed. But before the whites had time to carry out their plan of attack at Godby the Swedish armoured cruiser *Thor* cast anchor in the roads of Eckerö, and events then took an entirely unexpected turn.

The Swedes gave out that they had come to Aland for purely humanitarian reasons. They had received orders from the Swedish Government to rescue the inhabitants

#### EXPEDITION TO ALAND ISLANDS

from the violence of the Russians and to prevent an encounter there between the Russians and the white guards, with its consequent bloodshed. In this way the prolonged Swedish-Finnish-Russian negotiations were begun, in which the Finns were finally to be worsted. Sweden's object was to take possession of Aland, the population of which had expressed its wish to cut itself off from Finland. The moving spirit among the Swedes was Palmstierna, the Minister of Marine. He adopted means which were questionable, for he gave Alexis Gripenberg, the Finnish Minister in Stockholm, misleading information as to the situation and prospects of the Civic Guards on Aland and thereby succeeded finally in inducing him to urge the Uusikaupunki Corps to agree to the Swedish terms. Despite every effort, Gripenberg was unable to get in touch with the whites on Aland, even by telegraph, nor were the men he sent to negotiate able to reach their destination. The staff of the Civic Guards also tried to communicate by telegraph both with Stockholm and with General Mannerheim, but in vain.

Meanwhile the Uusikaupunki Corps was destined to fight a battle on Aland. On the 17th news was received that the icebreaker *Murtaja* was on its way from Turku to Aland with 300 red guards. This rendered the position of the Civic Guards very critical. Captain Fabritius called on the Russians at Godby to surrender, but as they declined the whites attacked in the evening, and with brilliant success. Godby was captured, 130 Russians were taken prisoners, and the booty included 150 rifles and a machine gun. On the 19th the reds, who had disembarked, supported by the Russians, counter-attacked with the object of retaking Godby, but they were repulsed with the help of the artillery. Some dozens of the enemy were killed,

#### THE RED OFFENSIVE

whereas the losses of the whites were insignificant.

In the meantime the Swedish diplomats had taken more decisive measures, and the inhabitants of Aland forgot how eagerly they had welcomed the whites from the mainland as their saviours only a few days previously. They now expressed a desire that both the Russians and the whites should leave the island, whereupon the Civic Guards movement lost the majority of its Aland supporters, only a hundred of the local population remaining in the ranks of the Uusikaupunki Corps.

Finally, the whites received a communication through Palmstierna, according to which General Mannerheim himself had requested Swedish assistance in transporting the white Aland expedition to Sweden and thence to white Finland. In reality Mannerheim had expressly ordered the Civic Guards to remain on Aland, but the telegram containing the order never reached its destination. The Uusikaupunki Corps, believing that it was acting in accordance with the instructions of the Commander-in-Chief, finally agreed, on the 20th, to surrender its arms and to be transported in Swedish ships to Sweden, whence it was conveyed to white Finland. It was then sent to the Satakunta front, and repeatedly distinguished itself during the rest of the war.

The Finnish whites were thus removed hurriedly from Aland, and without weapons. The Russians, on the other hand, were given five weeks to evacuate and were granted the right to transfer their large supplies of war materials to Turku. These arms were subsequently used by the reds in fighting the whites, and also against the many courageous volunteers from Sweden who had come east to join the ranks of the white defenders and assist in the ancient common task of fighting for freedom in Finland.

*The February Offensive of the Reds in Häme and Satakunta*

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On his appointment as adjutant to Haapalainen, the red Commander-in-Chief, Svetchnikoff, had a better opportunity than before to accomplish his plan of capturing Haapamäki. However, only a small part of the red forces which had opposed the East Uusimaa Civic Guards in South Finland could be transferred to the northern front, for, as already mentioned, their main body was engaged in the operations against the white corps at Kirkkonummi. The main weight of the attack that Svetchnikoff had planned was to be delivered at Ruovesi and Vilppula. Simultaneously the force concentrated at Pori was to advance via Merikarvia and Kankaanpää towards Kristiinankaupunki, while the red force assembled at Lahti on both sides of Lake Päijänne was to advance with Jyväskylä as its objective. The total number of red and Russian troops engaged in this offensive probably amounted to about 10,000, half of them being concentrated at Ruovesi and Vilppula (see map on page 217). Although the Russians had already been defeated at Ruovesi, on the 13th February Svetchnikoff ordered the main attack to be made from there, his intention being to roll up the white position at Vilppula from that flank, as it appeared to be too strong to be taken by a frontal attack alone. The command was entrusted to Ensign Stolboff, the attacking force consisting of 600-700 men with a quantity of machine guns and six guns.

Reinforcements had meanwhile been sent to the white defenders at this important point, so that they were

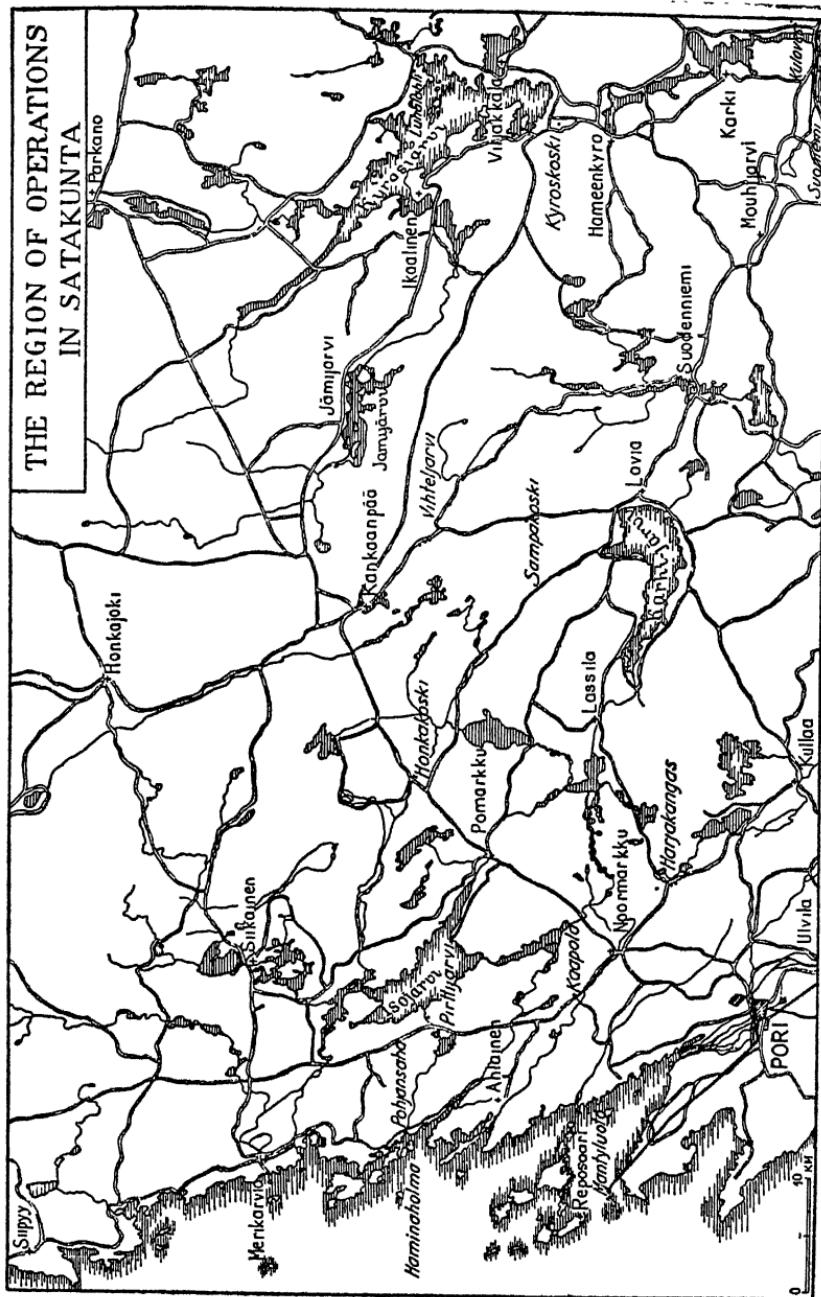
#### THE RED OFFENSIVE

appreciably stronger than a week before. The main body of the Satakunta Civic Guards, about 600 men, were concentrated at Kankaanpää. Another white detachment assembled by degrees in Kristiinankaupunki and Merikarvia, a third was formed by the Ikaalinen Civic Guards which occupied that district. The distance from Ikaalinen to the nearest white force at Ruovesi was 38 miles as the crow flies. On the 20th February the Commander-in-Chief appointed Colonel Ernst Linder, a Swede, to command the Satakunta detachment, a post temporarily held by Major W. Bergh. Its front extended for 80 miles and the absence of railways made all transport and troop movements difficult. For instance, the distance between Lavia, which the Commander-in-Chief had ordered to be captured, and the nearest railway station the white side of the front, Kauhajoki, was no less than 62 miles. The enemy was in a far more favourable position, as the Tampere-Pori railway ran comparatively close to the red front.

The red offensive in Satakunta began on the 21st February. According to Colonel Svetchnikoff's plan the red and Russian forces on this front were to try to reach Kristiinankaupunki via Merikarvia and Kankaanpää. Encounters were fought on that day in Merikarvia and at Vihteljärvi (three miles south of the church village of Kankaanpää). Both encounters ended successfully for the whites, who themselves took the initiative during the next few days. Pomarkku was taken on the 25th February and Lavia on the 2nd March, on which date also the reds attacked at Ikaalinen, north-west of Tampere, but were repulsed on the following day. The whites had by then been reinforced by the Uusikaupunki Corps repatriated via Sweden.

Already by the 25th February the red military com-

## THE REGION OF OPERATIONS IN SAKUNTALA



#### THE RED OFFENSIVE

mand had to acknowledge, to its disappointment, that the general offensive, started with such great hopes, had failed all along the line. Everywhere the attacks had been repulsed by the numerically weaker whites, with considerable loss to the attacking troops. The reds had evidently underestimated their adversaries, and it must be admitted that if the offensive had been launched a week earlier the result would very probably have been different; for in that interval, by the 17th February, the whites had received an appreciable addition to their forces with the arrival in Vaasa of a detachment of Jägers and a large consignment of arms.

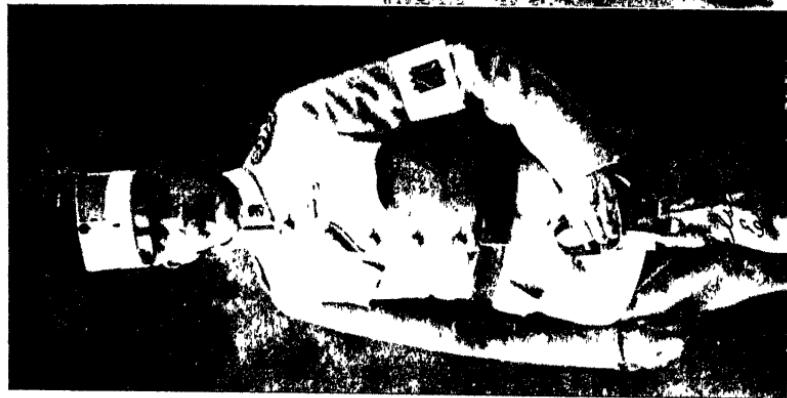
During the February offensive the red forces engaged were, as a rule, scattered; only on the Ruovesi–Vilppula sector was there an appreciable concentration of strength. The reason for spreading out the troops was the lack of means of transport and the primitive state of the supply service, as a result of which food and ammunition could only be delivered satisfactorily in the immediate vicinity of the railways. The low level of training, both of troops and officers, and their scanty organization also hindered to some extent the movement and command of large detachments. These difficulties were, indeed, at first similar in many respects to those of the whites.

There could be no question of close co-operation between the red forces engaged in the offensive, as the front along which it was carried out was too extended, and attempts to make a tactically co-ordinated attack failed owing to the inefficiency of the red and Russian staffs. The red offensive had therefore taken the form of a series of isolated engagements with an enormous consumption of ammunition, but without much result.

During this offensive the discipline of the red guards



GENERAL E. LOFSTROM



GENERAL ERNST LINDER

GENERAL H. IGNATIUS



proved to be very poor. Reports were received daily of entire companies withdrawing from the front of their own accord or refusing to go into action. There was dissatisfaction with the officers, the food, equipment, pay, in fact with everything. When the offensive began the leaders declared that all would go smoothly, with the result that when reverses were experienced the spirit of the troops sank in a couple of days. Realizing that his force was too disconnected and weak, Svetchnikoff decided not to renew the offensive until sufficient reinforcements were available. Fresh detachments were continually being formed, and at the end of February 3,000 men were set free in South Finland. The reds then prepared for a fresh offensive.

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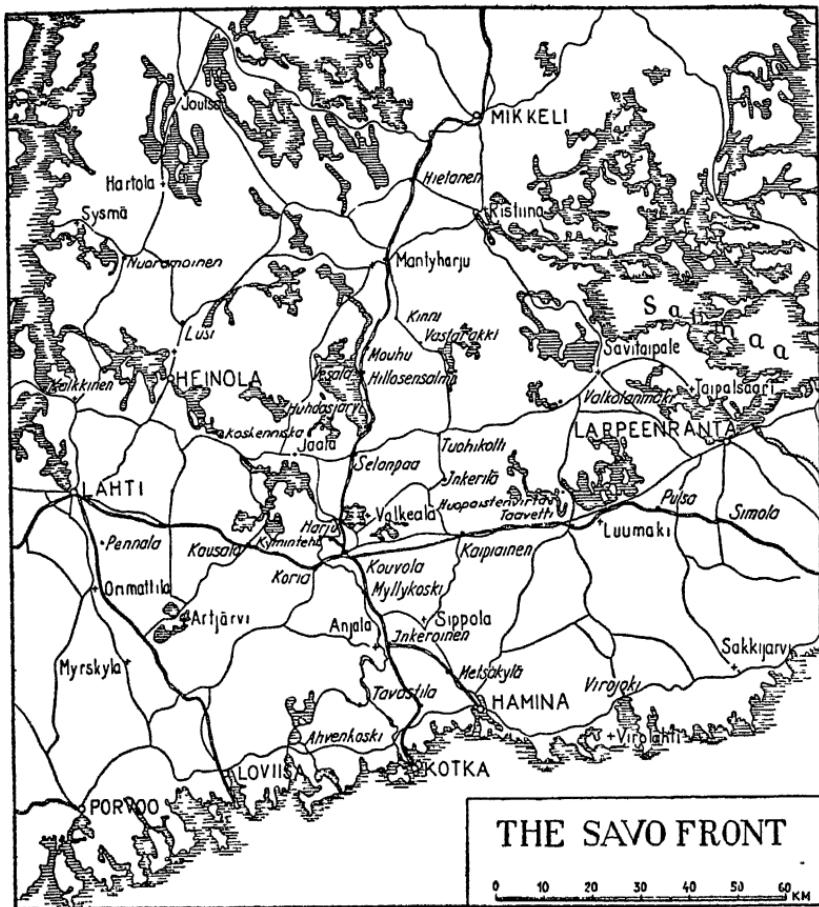
*The Fighting in Savo*

After the severe defeat at Mäntyharju on the 14th February a period of red inactivity set in on the sector near the Savo railway. The white commander in Savo, Major-General E. Löfström, decided to seize this favourable opportunity for capturing Varkaus. Accordingly, on the 20th February a white detachment of six companies with two machine guns started to besiege this area with its large mills. The reds occupied strong positions and put up a stubborn defence, so that the whites only advanced slowly. Finally, however, the defenders were forced back to the factory buildings, and on the evening of the 21st these, too, fell. About 1,500 reds, a great many of whom were very poorly armed, surrendered.

#### THE RED OFFENSIVE

On the right flank of the Savo front, at Sysmä, 200 whites repulsed a force of about 600 reds supported by machine guns. The white defence was so effective that the enemy found it advisable to fall back as far as Lahti. A few days later, on the 28th February, the whites, greatly reinforced and now having a strength of 650 men, attacked on this front. The object was to bring men, arms and ammunition to the relief of the whites in East Uusimaa, of whose retreat to the islands the Commander-in-Chief was ignorant. Unhappily grave tactical errors were made by the commander of the white attacking force, Colonel H. Hjalmarson, a Swedish officer who had become famous for his exploits in the Swedish gendarmerie in Persia. The break-through to the south failed and the whites were beaten in a bloody encounter at the town of Heinola, which was occupied by the reds and remained in their hands. A brave Swedish officer, Major P. G. Glimstedt, was killed in this battle.

After the capture of Varkaus the Ostrobothnian and Carelian troops which had been placed at Major-General Löfström's disposal were transferred to their own fronts, the comparatively weak detachments formed in the districts of Kuopio and Mikkeli remaining under Löfström's command. At the beginning of March the white force on the Savo front amounted to approximately 2,400 men with 13 machine guns and 3 guns. The main body was stationed at Mäntyharju and in Mikkeli, as the main attack of the reds was to be expected in the direction of the railway, and four white companies were posted at Lusi to guard the important cross-roads which had been captured there. On the eastern flank a strong red detachment had attacked and pushed back the white outposts to



#### THE RED OFFENSIVE

Suomenniemi and occupied the line from Savitaipale to Valkolanmäki.

At the end of February and the first days of March news was received of a large enemy concentration at Hillosensalmi, south of Mäntyharju. Major-General Löfström decided to anticipate the enemy by active operations, but an ambitious offensive started on the 3rd March in a direction south of Mäntyharju failed. Like Hjalmarson's attack at Heinola it was caused by an under-estimation of the enemy due to the easy opening success of the War of Independence. But it was not entirely fruitless. The main red group of the Savo front had its preparations for attack seriously upset and the whites gained a very necessary respite. The same result was achieved by the attacks made on the 4th and 5th on the eastern part of this front. Although the church village of Savitaipale was not retaken, the readiness of the reds for attack was curbed for some time.

After the fighting south of Mäntyharju and at Savitaipale the Savo front was given a quiet period. The whites used this respite to improve their organization for battle, more recruits were obtained by conscription, and training camps were established. By the middle of March the white force on the Savo front amounted to 2,700 men. On the 9th March about 2,000 reds attacked Lusi and drove back the weak white outposts from this important road junction. Major-General Löfström despatched reinforcements to this sector and Lusi was retaken on the 13th March; the church village of Heinola being captured on the following day. On the 15th a fresh attack was made on the town of Heinola, but was repulsed by the reds.

In view of the general situation it was very important

## DEFENCE OF CARELIA, RAUTU AND VALKJÄRVI

that the white troops in Savo should continue to attract the attention of the reds during the first half of March. Their action helped to keep secret the offensive preparations of the whites in North Häme and thereby to increase the effect of surprise.

### *The Defence of Carelia, Rautu and Valkjärvi*

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(See map on page 99)

The reds and the Russians had already attacked the white positions south of Antrea between the 9th and 14th February, but without success.

The command of the red-Russian forces operating in Carelia was nominally subordinated to the duumvirate Haapalainen-Svetchnikoff, but in reality the "Viipuri staff" received its orders from Petrograd. The unexpectedly stiff resistance of the whites showed the Russian leaders that larger forces must be employed and in a larger area than hitherto if the offensive was to be successful. Fresh detachments of volunteers were hastily formed in Petrograd and at the same time the training, equipment and arming of the red guards were made more efficient.

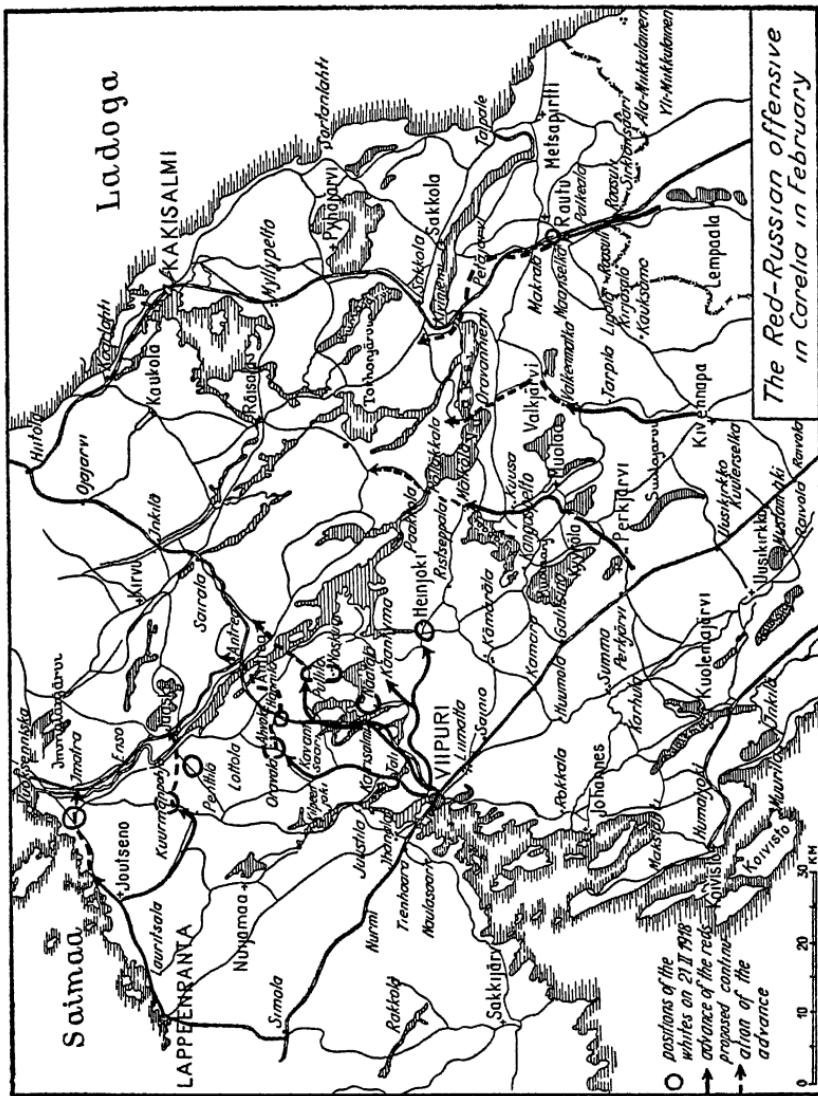
According to the new plan the offensive was to be made from four points. At Raasuli a detachment of about 1,000 men, under the command of Russian officers, was to capture the bridges at Kiviniemi. A detachment of about the same strength was to advance from Kivennapa and Perkjärvi via Valkjärvi and Muola to Oravaniemi and

#### THE RED OFFENSIVE

Pölläkkälä. On reaching the northern bank of the Vuoksi at Kiviniemi, Oravaneimi and Pölläkkälä, these two detachments were to advance along the river towards Antrea and support the attack of the main force, which was to be launched in the direction of Viipuri—Antrea. A fourth group, starting from Lappeenranta, was to attack the line Imatra—Jääski. The total number of troops concentrated for this offensive probably amounted to not less than 10,000 men, and in addition appreciable reinforcements were received both from Russia and from West Finland during the battle.

It will be noticed that the plan, based principally on the distribution of the troops, was to launch the main offensive again at Antrea, where the main force of the whites was assembled and had comparatively good defensive positions. Had it been directed against Raasuli—Kiviniemi it might easily have proved fatal.

On Thursday, the 21st February, the red-Russian Raasuli detachment with its artillery crossed the frontier. The armed whites on this part of the front amounted to 65 men, and of these only 20 were on the frontier when the Russians reached Raasuli. The rest were stationed at Kiviniemi, but reached the front before the Russian attack began. Under their gallant commander—a Jäger—the whites tried to hold up the enemy at the frontier itself, but they were soon forced to retire to Rautu station, where they continued their resistance. The enemy spent that night at Maanselkä, but during the same evening and night the whites received reinforcements, bringing their strength up to 300 men. By stubborn resistance another day was gained, in the course of which further reinforcements arrived. The Russians renewed their attack on the 23rd and, employing their full strength, finally succeeded



#### THE RED OFFENSIVE

in capturing Rautu station and vicinity. This they began to fortify as a base for further offensive action against the white position, which now curved round the station to west, north and east. The courage of the original 65 whites on the 21st February had thus enabled the bridge-head at Kiviniemi to be saved, a deed of decisive significance for the defence of the whole Carelian front and, indirectly, for the final white offensive from it.

Simultaneously with the Russian Raasuli detachment's attack at Rautu a detachment of red guards had advanced from Kivennapa on Valkjärvi. This attack was also repulsed.

By the 27th February the white defenders at Rautu numbered about 500 men, divided into three companies. They had two machine guns at their disposal. The left flank was protected by slightly over 100 local Civic Guards at Metsäpirtti, an important district as it was traversed by a route used by the whites in Petrograd to transport arms to white Finland and send information of the plans and actions of the Russians, but being comparatively far from the railway the reds made no attempt at encirclement there. At 6 p.m. on this day the Russians started a strong attack against the church village of Rautu, but were beaten off. On the following day the attack was repeated, with the same result. The Russians now required a day's rest to reorganize and fill the gaps in their decimated ranks; fresh men, artillery, ammunition and supplies arriving unceasingly from Petrograd. The day's respite was also fully employed by the defenders of Rautu, who had already been in the firing line for 48 hours, and who the next day were again ready to face the fierce attacks of the enemy.

Although the whites had themselves been reinforced

by 80 men, the superiority of the attacking force was so great that the situation became critical, as the Russians, forcing their way between Leinikkälä and Mäkrälä, were able to reach Lake Leinikkälä. The resistance of the whites was breaking, but the Russians were not quick enough to exploit the advantage they had gained before those white troops still capable of a counter-attack fell on the Russian flank at Mäkrälä and forced it to retire from Lake Leinikkälä. The white front was re-established.

Once more the Bolshevik hordes had been repulsed, and the heavy losses which the Russians suffered on this day, the 2nd March, so frightened them that no fresh attacks were made at Rautu for some time.

On the other hand enemy activity at Valkjärvi increased and assumed dangerous proportions. From the 27th February to the 6th March the white defending force of 300-350 men was able to repel the comparatively feeble attacks of the reds, but on the latter date a serious situation developed. The front was broken through and the rear of the whites at Kiviniemi and Rautu lay open. The reds, however, failed to exploit this favourable opportunity, and throughout the whole of the 7th they remained passive in Valkjärvi. In the meantime the staff at Kiviniemi was able to send troops from various quarters to Valkjärvi, so that when the reds resumed their advance on the 8th they found strong opposition and were no longer able to take the church village of Valkjärvi. The white defences had been reorganized at the last moment.

The Valkjärvi-Rautu front still held and the bridge-head at Kiviniemi remained in the hands of the whites. The enemy, unable to advance further, had to halt in the neighbourhood of the frontier.

*Ahvola*

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The offensive of the main red-Russian group in the direction Viipuri-Antrea began on the 26th February. According to a statement by a red authority, 1,200 Russians and 2,800 Finnish reds, or altogether 4,000 men, were engaged in it. It is easy to imagine the pressure to which the white defenders, about 350 men, were exposed when the attack by this greatly superior force, supported by artillery, developed. The Russians had also concentrated a couple of dozen guns, including heavy siege guns, for the offensive on this narrow sector, and ample ammunition was obtained from the large stores in the adjacent town of Viipuri. The artillery fire was directed by Russian artillery officers.

The whites had no reserves, for the commander of the front had just had to send help to Rautu. Without relief therefore the troops, including some volunteer schoolboys, spread out at wide intervals, had to hold their ground by rifle fire alone until, on the 1st March, the enemy attacked with greater violence than before. The artillery fire was so heavy that at times three shots a second could be counted. The defenders had to give way slightly in the course of the day, but in the evening the enemy withdrew. In spite of their heroism the small band of defenders would never have been able to hold their line if the attacking force had used the ground better, for the reds and the Russians committed the grave error of making frontal attacks in serried ranks over the open against the white positions. Further, they neglected the element of

surprise, as the attacks began and ended at almost regular intervals, thereby greatly assisting the defence.

On the 28th February the reds also attacked in the direction Lappeenranta-Imatra, and succeeded in capturing the church village of Joutseno, but efforts to advance further were unsuccessful.

On the 3rd March the red-Russian advance reached its height at Ahvola. At dawn the artillery opened a heavy fire, which increased in intensity at midday. The two small mountain guns of the whites replied as well as the scanty supply of ammunition permitted. On this day the reds and Russians used their full force with the intention of crushing the small white detachment. Again and again they attacked, at times reaching the white positions, where there were hand-to-hand encounters in places. The fact that after six days of almost uninterrupted fighting the whites were able to withstand this storm was little short of miraculous; and again during the night and at dawn on the 4th the enemy repeated their attacks, but in vain. Worn out by the length and severity of the struggle, the whites carried on more mechanically than consciously, having reached the limit of endurance. Fortunately the heavy losses suffered by the reds and the Russians during the attacks called for a few days' breathing space, and during that time the whites were able to obtain reinforcements, thanks to the local commander and also to the Commander-in-Chief.

On the 11th and 12th March, in co-operation with the simultaneous general offensive, the centre of which was at Häme (see page 119), the reds and Russians made a final effort at Ahvola and Valkjärvi, but at both places the attacks were repulsed.

The fighting at Ahvola subsequently assumed the char-

acter of position warfare, nevertheless the hostile fire continued to be heavy and the losses of the whites were considerable. The frequently repeated bulletin from headquarters: "At Ahvola the usual exchange of fire continues", referred in reality to continuous fighting.

*The White Army and the Plans of the Commander-in-Chief*

*The Origin and Organization of the White Army*

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The nucleus of the white army consisted of the Jäger and the Civic Guards formed in various parts of the country from the autumn of 1917 onwards. It was intended to give them a uniform organization, forming them into units in the Civic Guards districts, i.e. battalions, companies, platoons and groups; but, as stated earlier, that organization was only in its initial stages. It was not yet uniform, nor were the conditions of command clearly laid down, and there was a great shortage of instructors. The 62 Jägers who had returned to Finland were inadequate, and their first partly-trained assistants were the 200 young men who had been through the "Vimpeli Military School" (a three weeks' officers' course established at the end of 1917 at Vimpeli in South Ostrobothnia). The Civic Guards' officers were mostly civilians with only a very elementary military training.

The difficulties of training were also increased by the need for secrecy in most places, and the shortage of arms was also a serious obstacle. The Viipuri Civic Guards, for instance, one of the largest detachments in the country,

#### PLANS OF THE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF

had at first only about 100 rifles, 300 revolvers and 2 machine guns.

When the War of Independence broke out there was no army, and it was only in Ostrobothnia, where the organization of the Civic Guards was most advanced and where the command was in the hands of General Mannerheim, that its development proceeded from the first according to a uniform plan.

The Commander-in-Chief, officially appointed by the Senate on the 27th January, gradually extended his authority until it finally embraced almost all the Civic Guards throughout the country, and it is important to mention here the great difficulties which he had to overcome. The conditions of command were chaotic, and the number of those who claimed the right to command was legion. A mediocre general steeped in the tradition of the Russian military bureaucracy would have been an immediate and hopeless failure. Merely to distribute decorations and appeal to his rights as Commander-in-Chief would have availed little without the influence of personality. It was owing to his possession of such an influence that the Commander-in-Chief soon gained the admiration and confidence of his untrained peasant troops.

When North Finland had been liberated and the disjointed front had been united, the white leaders had to grapple with the gigantic task of creating an army and the necessary administrative services. To achieve the object of the war a strictly disciplined, efficient army was essential. While the weak protective line beat off the attacks of the reds and the Russians, this work of organization was taken in hand by the Commander-in-Chief.

The white troops were recruited originally entirely from volunteers, but it soon became evident that by this

#### THE RED OFFENSIVE

means alone the army could not obtain sufficient numbers, for the most populated part of the country was in the hands of the reds. It was therefore decided to adopt a modified form of conscription, and a plan was drafted for an establishment of up to twenty battalions of infantry, five to eight squadrons of cavalry, and as much artillery as captured and imported materials permitted. At the same time the creation of fresh voluntary Civic Guards continued, and these were to be employed for defensive purposes during the time the regular army was being made efficient. Unfortunately conscription did not yield the desired result, as it roused the opposition of the Civic Guards.

The units recruited by conscription were trained for about a month before being sent to the front, but the uniformity and efficiency of the training were handicapped by the motley composition of the officers. In the middle of March, when the first general offensive of the whites started, the following units had been raised:

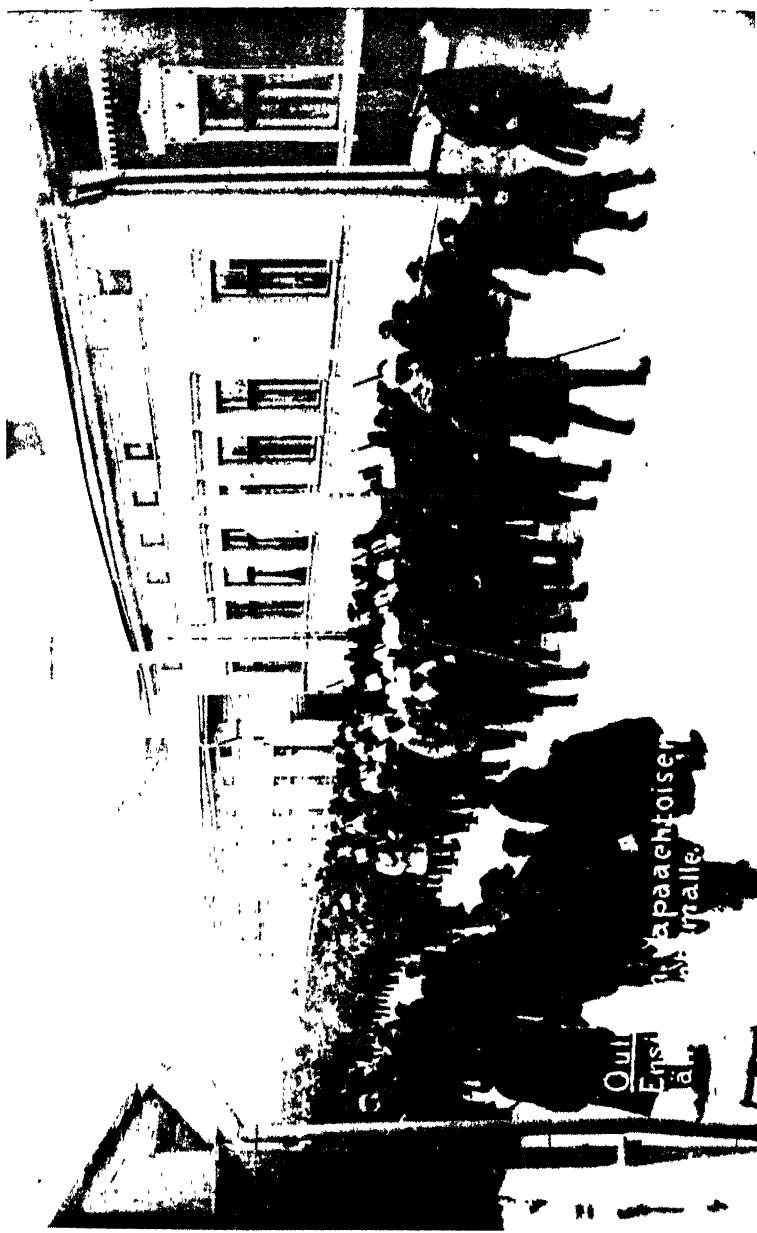
Six battalions of grenadiers, each consisting of staff, 3 infantry companies and a machine-gun company (there were 600 men in a battalion);

The Uusimaa dragoon regiment (4 squadrons and a machine-gun squadron, altogether 635 men);

Six 2-gun batteries and six demolition companies.

Efforts were made to form companies, battalions and regiments of the Civic Guards. Each regiment was to consist of three battalions, each battalion of three companies, each company of three platoons and each platoon of six groups of ten men. This organization had not yet been completed when the first general offensive began. The infantry acted independently by units ranging from platoons to regiments of five battalions.

The greater part of the Civic Guard infantry was



THE FIRST WHITE VOLUNTEERS FROM OULU LEAVING FOR THE FRONT

organized in battalions, but the detachments of Civic Guards in the Häme group under the command of Colonel M. Wetzer, though incessantly employed in defensive fighting, still had no uniform organization at the beginning of the offensive, only achieving a uniform battalion organization in the course of it. On the other hand, the North Häme Regiment, belonging to the Jämsä group under the command of Colonel K. F. Wilkman, was uniformly organized.

On the Savo front the organization into battalions had, generally speaking, not yet been carried out, but in Carelia it was completed by the beginning of February, and in the middle of March the battalions were formed into the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Carelian Regiments. Of these the 1st and 3rd each consisted of three battalions, while as many as five battalions belonged to the 2nd Regiment.

The Civic Guards at the beginning of the War of Independence had, as mentioned before, received for the most part only elementary training, but those formed during the war were also given battle training to a limited extent, and it was continued at the front whenever the situation permitted. At Mikkeli and Hiitola, and at other places, special training camps were established at the beginning of February, the troops being sent there in small groups to receive one or two weeks' supplementary training.

When it became clear that a modified form of conscription did not, as already stated, achieve the desired result, the Government<sup>1</sup> proclaimed the revival of a law of con-

<sup>1</sup> On the outbreak of the red revolt Finland was only left without a lawful government for a couple of days, for four members of the Government, the Ministers H. Renvall, J. Arajärvi, A. Frey and E. Y. Pehkonen, had travelled to Vaasa at the last moment and arrived there on the 29th January after an adventurous journey. The so-called Vaasa Government

scription which had been suspended by the Russians, extending recruiting to all men from twenty-one to forty years of age. This was started at the end of February. The reintroduction of conscription was regarded with anything but pleasure by the Social-Democratic leaders in white Finland, but there was no serious opposition to it, and the number of men who absented themselves without good reason was comparatively small. Many of the conscripts were, of course, workmen, but they subsequently fulfilled their duties at the front in an honourable manner and without grumbling. There were no signs of disloyalty, the socialistic revolutionary propaganda not having penetrated deep enough.

When the conscripts began to come in at the end of February and the beginning of March, fresh regular troops were formed. The command and training of these so-called Jäger troops was entrusted to the Jägers who had returned from Germany, for on the 25th February the main body of the Jäger battalion had at last reached Vaasa, an event which marked the turn of the tide in the War of Independence and one which was hailed with joy throughout white Finland.

The training which the Jägers had received was not in all respects adapted to the task they now had to perform, but this was not of supreme importance in the special conditions prevailing. The chief requirement of an officer was that he should set a personal example, that he should understand the susceptible psychology of an uneducated

composed of four Ministers at once started acting as the Government of White Finland. In March the Head of the Government, P. E. Svinhufvud, and Minister J. Castren reached Vaasa, both having escaped from Helsinki on board the icebreaker *Tarmo*, which had been seized by the whites, to Tallinn and had returned thence to White Finland via Germany and Sweden.

or only elementarily trained Finnish detachment and be able to adapt himself to circumstances. As officers during the War of Independence the Jägers were invaluable.

A week before the main body of the Jägers arrived in Finland a valuable supply of arms was received from Germany. In addition to artillery material and hand-grenades, it consisted of 44,380 rifles, 63 machine guns and about nine million rifle cartridges. This supply of rifles meant that not only the conscripted and proposed fresh troops, but also the white Finnish Civic Guards, who had till now been without weapons, could be armed.

The conscripts were divided into three Jäger brigades. Each brigade was composed of two regiments (a regiment numbered 2,100 men), each regiment of three battalions, and each battalion of three companies and a machine-gun company. In addition to these infantry formations, the so-called Jäger infantry, the following formations of other arms were established among the conscripts:

The Carelian Mounted Jäger Regiment (3 squadrons),  
The 1st and 2nd Heavy Batteries (2 guns each),  
The 13th-15th Batteries (2 guns each),  
The 20th-22nd Howitzer Batteries (2 guns each),  
The 1st-4th Jäger Batteries (4 guns each),  
The 1st-4th Field Telegraph Companies.

The conscripted troops obtained better training than the others, lasting from one to one and a half months, before they were sent to the front. Their officers were the best Jägers available, and military discipline could be enforced more effectively than among the voluntary formations of Civic Guards.

At the time of the capture of Tampere at the beginning of April the two first brigades of the Jäger infantry were ready and were composed of the 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th

#### THE RED OFFENSIVE

·Jäger Regiments, of which the first three took part in the fighting at Tampere. In addition to the troops mentioned above, a reserve, called the Civic Guards Reserve, divided into seven reserve battalions, was formed behind the front out of local Civic Guards. In spite of their small complement of officers and very inadequate organization, training and equipment, these battalions were of great value during the first great offensive, because they released front-line troops from duties of secondary importance and allowed the Jäger troops two valuable weeks for further training.

As regards the other arms of the white army, the artillery consisted of 26 batteries, altogether 56 guns, prior to the taking of Tampere, but owing to antiquated material and a short period of training the shooting of the artillery was very moderate at the beginning of the war. The cavalry regiments have already been mentioned. The air force consisted of six old-fashioned Swedish observation planes, with a Swedish officer, Captain A. Hygerth, as its chief, from the middle of March to the middle of April, and the men were mostly Swedes. At the beginning of April two German observation land-planes were received and sent to the Carelian front, where an "Air Division II" was formed, while "Air Division I" remained active in Häme. On the 11th April another air division, called "The Air Division of the Carelian Army Corps", was formed to co-operate with the Carelian group, and included some machines obtained from Petrograd, whose Russian crews had agreed to serve in white Finland. The pioneer troops in the white army consisted only of the demolition companies, already mentioned, and the company of engineers of the Satakunta group. The signalling troops consisted, as stated above, of four field telegraph

## ORIGIN AND ORGANIZATION OF WHITE ARMY

companies. There were three schools connected with the white army: one for N.C.O.s, one for officers and those on the reserve, and one for gunners.

The various departments of headquarters were under the immediate control of the Commander-in-Chief. They were the General Staff, with General G. Theslöf as its chief, the Munitions Staff, the Transport Staff and the General Inspection. Questions of operations were dealt with and reported to the Commander-in-Chief by the Department of the Quartermaster-General, General Hannes Ignatius, of the General Staff. Some Swedish officers were of inestimable assistance in organizing headquarters and, later, in the work of the General Staff. From the beginning of March the distinguished organizer and leader of industry, Colonel R. Walden, acted as Chief of Transport. The transport staff in his charge included the commissariat department in charge of another capable industrialist, G. Serlachius, subsequently promoted to the rank of lieutenant-colonel, and the meritorious efforts of which contributed effectively to the satisfactory conclusion of the war.

By an Army Order of the 17th February the army at the front was divided into different groups. The area of the Satakunta group extended from the Gulf of Bothnia to Lake Näsijärvi, with Colonel E. Linder in command: the Häme group, between Lake Päijänne and Lake Saimaa, was under Colonel Wetzer; the Savo group was under Major-General E. Löfström ("Toll"); and the Carelian group, between Lake Saimaa and Lake Ladoga, was under Captain Aarne Sihvo. The last three of these four Group-commanders had already taken up their appointments. Colonel Wetzer commanded the defence of the Ruovesi-Vilppula-Mänttä line. Major-General

#### THE RED OFFENSIVE

Löfström had taken command of the front formed at Mäntyharju and was preparing to capture Varkaus, and Captain Sihvo had already commanded the defence of the Vuoksi line for a couple of weeks.

The position of the lakes referred to made them very suitable as boundaries, and the land between them formed self-contained sectors. This division was a definite improvement. At the beginning of the war numerous units fighting on the different fronts were directly subordinated to Headquarters and the conditions of command were uncertain and chaotic. By this new division the Commander-in-Chief created a properly organized system, and although the confusion did not cease at once, order was established by degrees.

The principal task of each group was to beat back the attacks of the enemy, and the next in importance, as far as circumstances permitted, to complete its own organization. The farther the enemy advanced and thereby forced additional troops to be brought into the firing line, the less were the opportunities for organization. The troops were decidedly inferior to the enemy in numbers, and the shortage of arms had made any appreciable increase of the forces impossible until the large consignment of arms, already referred to, arrived in Vaasa on the 17th February, when 12,000 rifles were sent to Carelia and 7,500 to Savo.

Without all this work of organization, carried out under the guidance of the Commander-in-Chief, the War of Independence could not have been brought to a successful conclusion. The great patriotism and moral strength which inspired the white soldiers to make sacrifices and endure hardships would scarcely have sufficed without this leadership and training by a great commander. Both as an

organizer and in his capacity as director of military operations he had to discard all previous doctrines, and this needed a clear intellect combined with determination and courage, backed by military experience. He knew the Finnish people, their good points as well as their weaknesses, and it was only a Commander-in-Chief possessing all these qualities who could have created the white army and led it to victory. His deeds entitle him to a place among the great commanders of history.

### *The Swedish Volunteers in the White Army*

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The fateful tidings from across the Gulf of Bothnia had aroused keen sympathy for Finland and her cause among people in Sweden, and many were convinced that it was their duty to take an active part in Finland's struggle. No active measures, however, were to be expected from official circles in Sweden. If help was to be given, it would have to be voluntary.

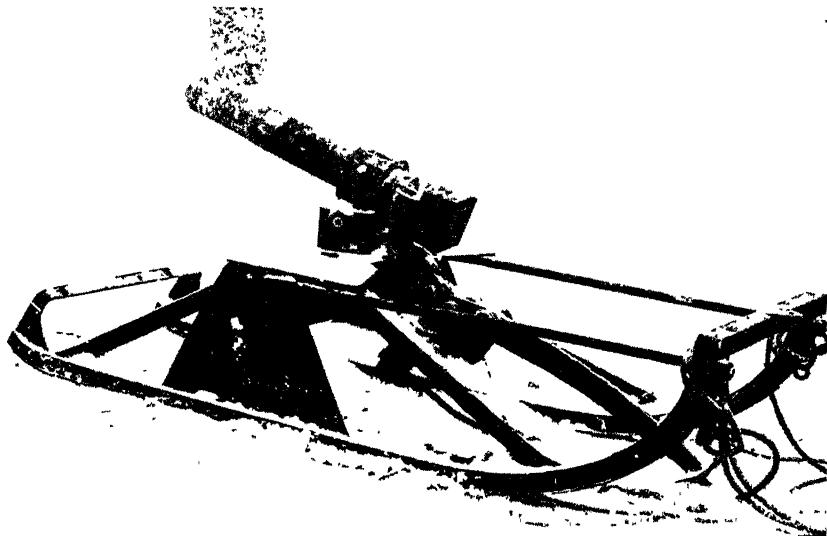
Energetic efforts were therefore made in Sweden to assist Finland by voluntary means. An organization calling itself "The Friends of Finland", was formed by people who were interested, to take charge of the equipment and volunteers, and arrange for their transfer to Finland. General Mannerheim's brother, Baron J. Mannerheim, was chairman of "The Friends of Finland", and thanks to a constant exchange of telegrams he was able to keep "The Friends of Finland" informed of the wishes of the Commander-in-Chief. In this connection should be men-

#### THE RED OFFENSIVE

tioned the great financial support given by Baron J. Mannerheim and Baron Karl Langenskjöld.

With regard to the volunteers General Mannerheim had stated that above all he required officers, non-commissioned officers and men with special training. The first officers left for Finland on the 7th February; Colonel Ernst Linder, Staff Captains G. M. Törngren, H. K. R. Malmberg, W. A. Douglas, H. G. R. Peyront and Captain of Artillery C. Petersen, and they were followed daily during the next few days and weeks by others. By the middle of February General Mannerheim had received the full complement of 25 Swedish officers he said he required at once. Further, he had asked for 200 N.C.O.s, 50 gunners and 50 machine-gunners, and these also were supplied. The authorities in Sweden, quite naturally, did not see their way to granting leave of absence to all the officers who declared their willingness to go to Finland, for in some regiments almost all the officers applied. Non-commissioned officers as well as rank and file who wished to enter the Finnish service could be granted leave by their own regimental commanding officers, and as some applications for leave had to be refused in view of Sweden's own military requirements, there were many cases of desertion.

The Swedish contribution to Finland's War of Independence was, however, not confined to the great work performed by those who served at Headquarters, on the staffs, and with the Finnish troops. As soon as it was evident that official Sweden would give Finland no active assistance whatever, "The Friends of Finland" began to form a voluntary Swedish detachment. The original idea was to collect a brigade consisting of three battalions of normal strength. If it had been possible to carry on open



(above) THE "VARKAUS CANNON" MADE BY THE REDS. ON  
THE SECOND FIRING IT BURST, KILLING TWO GUNNERS  
(below) THE FIRST COMPANY OF THE KUOPIO CIVIL GUARD  
AT VARKAUS

and energetic propaganda in favour of this idea, this would probably have been achieved, but the Swedish Government raised obstacles, with the result that the strength of the brigade was appreciably less than had been intended. Altogether 803 volunteers enrolled themselves in the brigade, but its effective force at any one time never exceeded about 500 men, equivalent to a weak battalion. In quality, however, it was a picked body of men, and the number of officers was comparatively larger than normal.

The Swedish Brigade represented a great moral reinforcement, for it embodied the will of the Swedish nation to stretch out a hand to Finland, and expressed the appreciation that Finland's struggle was also Sweden's. Swedes also worked in the ambulances. The Swedish Red Cross, and "The Friends of Finland" equipped and sent four ambulances to Finland, in addition to which there was the mounted ambulance of the Red Star in Sweden. All five filled an urgent need and performed inestimable service in the cause of mercy.

The number of Swedes who took part in Finland's War of Independence—including the 78 persons on the staff of the ambulances—amounted to 1,169, of whom 94 were officers, 21 Territorial officers and 295 non-commissioned officers; 675 men served in the Swedish Brigade alone, 128 partly in the brigade and partly with Finnish troops, and 288 exclusively among Finnish troops.

### *The Plans of the Commander-in-Chief*

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The object of the work of organization behind the white front was to make a large and decisive offensive

possible. To attain the purpose of the war—to release Finland from Russia—the red and Russian forces had first to be reduced to impotence, and to do this it was important to break the connection between the revolutionaries and Russia, i.e. the Viipuri—Petrograd railway, which represented the main artery of the red-Russian operations both in a material and moral respect. The Commander-in-Chief was therefore determined from the first to start an offensive on the Carelian isthmus as soon as possible. The white positions in Carelia formed a suitable starting-point, but it was impossible to fix a time for it, even approximately, because the organizing of the weapon, an army capable of taking the offensive, was in its initial phase.

For the time being the Commander-in-Chief was forced to devote all his attention to defence. The principal directions for the enemy's attack was Viipuri—Antrea—Elisenvaara, Kouvola—Mäntyharju—Pieksämäki and Tampere—Vilppula—Haapamäki. The position seemed least dangerous in Savo. In Carelia, it is true, the bridge-heads south of the Vuoksi, which would be of such importance for the final decisive offensive, were seriously threatened, but there was no actual danger of a far-reaching catastrophe. In North Häme, on the contrary, the fate of the whole of white Finland was at stake. The Ruovesi—Vilppula—Mänttä line of defence was far from good, in addition to which the distance of the enemy from there to Haapamäki, the possession of which was vital to the whites, was only fifteen miles.

The strategic importance of Haapamäki was so vital that, without exaggeration, the place could be called the key to white Finland. The supply of arms and ammunition to the white troops in Savo and Carelia was entirely

dependent on keeping the Haapamäki–Pieksämäki railway in the hands of the whites. The capture of Haapamäki would mean the separation of white Finland into two parts, of which the eastern would soon exhaust its forces and have to capitulate.

The violent attacks on Ruovesi and Vilppula showed as clearly as need be that the enemy, too, realized the importance of Haapamäki. Besides, information regarding Svetchnikoff's plans had reached Headquarters, the only doubtful point being to what extent Russian troops would continue to take part in the attacks.

Before the red offensive in February the Commander-in-Chief had already considered the possibility of advancing the white positions in North Häme by means of offensive action, and in that way ensure the possession of Haapamäki. The idea of capturing the important enemy base of Tampere was also discussed in this connection, but the plan had not yet taken clear shape when the red offensive began and forced all other plans to be laid aside. Attention had to be given mainly to defensive tasks.

As soon as the red attack had subsided, however, the question was again brought up for discussion. It had become known that the enemy had received additional forces, assembled in the region of Tampere, and the Commander-in-Chief calculated that on the front between the Gulf of Bothnia and Lake Päijänne the reds would soon have about 25,000 men at their disposal. In fact, a fresh enemy offensive was obviously being prepared, and it might be difficult to resist it. It even seemed doubtful whether the Vilppula front was any longer capable of withstanding a powerful enemy attack, and the defence would certainly consume the reserves of the Commander-in-Chief, i.e. the forces that had been organized

#### THE RED OFFENSIVE

behind the front for the decisive offensive. In these circumstances the Commander-in-Chief considered that the Vilppula front would be best defended by active operations, and on the 27th February he made the fateful decision to start an offensive in North Häme.

During the abortive attacks of the reds in February some important observations had been made. Above all, a clear idea, in outline, was obtained of the manner in which the main forces of the enemy were grouped. It was evident that the main red force occupied the Ruovesi-Vilppula-Mänttä sector of the front and the area south of that line. Between the railway and Lake Päijänne, on the contrary, the red troops were considerably farther south. There were red forces at Längelmäki, Kuhmalahti, Luopioinen and Padasjoki, but Kuhmoinen was white. An envelopment of the enemy forces near Vilppula by means of an offensive in the Jämsä-Längelmäki-Orivesi direction appeared in the circumstances to have the best chance of success; on this basis the white headquarters began to draw up a plan for the coming offensive.

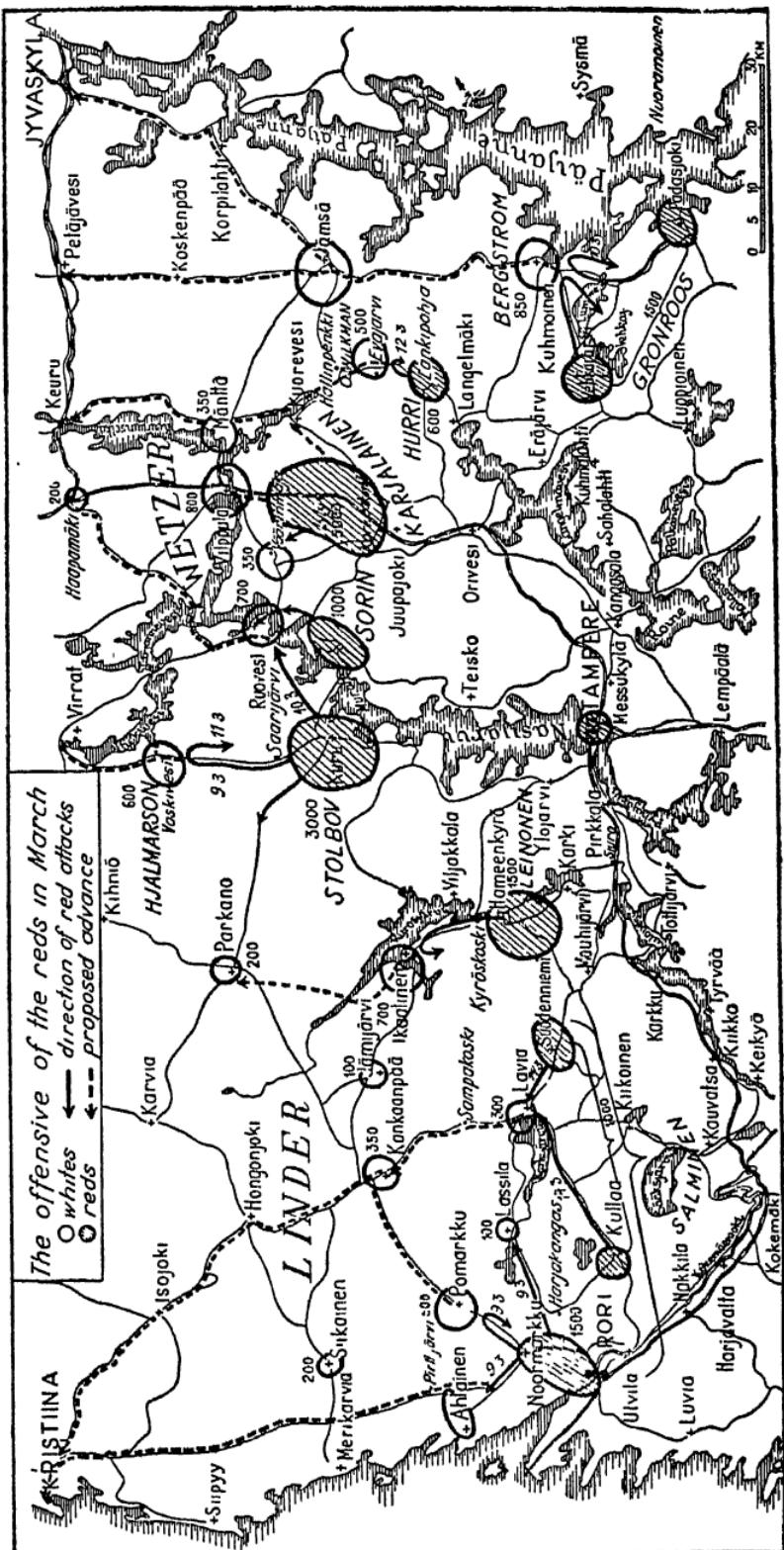
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#### *The Red Offensive in March in Häme and Satakunta*

On the 3rd March a preliminary order for a fresh general offensive was issued, signed by Eero Haapalainen, "Commander-in-Chief of all troops in Finland", his adjutant, Colonel Svetchnikoff, and the Chief of the General Staff, August Wesley, and addressed to the "voluntary Russian detachments of troops and Finland's red guards".



(above) RED GENERAL STAFF  
(below) A TORNIO DETACHMENT LEAVING FOR THE FRONT



#### THE RED OFFENSIVE

Its object was the same as in February—the capture of the railway from Haapamäki to Pieksämäki—and its centre was again about Häme. Svetchnikoff was anxious to effect as strong a concentration of force as possible in the direction of Haapamäki, and therefore tried to interrupt the attacks which had been started on the 21st February in Carelia. He explained his demands with a perfectly correct reference to the important fact that the fate of the Vuoksi front would be settled at Haapamäki, as the capture of that place would soon paralyse the white defence in Carelia. However, his authority and Haapalainen's did not extend as far as the Carelian front, the Viipuri staff worked partly independently and partly by instructions from Petrograd. In the east, therefore, no forces could be released, but considerable reinforcements were obtained from the south, where the "cleaning up" work had just been completed.

It may be worth mention in this connection that in general the red troops, with the exception of a few companies of picked troops, did not like to be moved from one front to another. Another characteristic of the reds' method of conducting the war was that, as a rule, no reserves existed. At the front no individual detachments were held in reserve, and as communications between the foremost troops, outposts and patrols were poor, this created a feeling of uncertainty. Consequently fresh reinforcements were constantly being demanded, even under the threat of abandoning the front, so that it was necessary to send into the line all the troops which had been assembled in preparation. During a battle there was no detachment to deal the decisive blow; and not even the supreme command had any reserves at its disposal to put into the struggle in case of need or for forcing a decision.

#### RED OFFENSIVE IN HÄME AND SATAKUNTA

The main task in the new offensive had been entrusted to the troops on the western front. They were commanded by Hugo Salmela, with a Russian officer, Colonel Bulatsel, as his adjutant. Salmela was one of the best of the red leaders. He was brave and had a strong will and sense of duty. In addition, his conduct, unlike many of the other red leaders, was blameless. Although he had no military training he showed a definite military instinct and real qualities of leadership. The command of the main attack was therefore in comparatively good hands. This did not signify much, however, for the absence of means of communication and trained officers rendered it impossible to accomplish the complicated plan on which the offensive was based.

The red forces between the Gulf of Bothnia and Lake Päijänne amounted to 15,000-16,000 men, the majority of whom were in the Häme sector. The main attack was centred along the Ruovesi-Vilppula-Mänttä line, about 5,000 men being concentrated astride the railway in the direction of Vilppula. On the right there were only about 600 men, but on the left altogether about 4,000.

Heavy fighting broke out on the whole front from the Gulf of Bothnia to Lake Päijänne, but since the offensive in February the position of the white troops, their organization, arming, training and the conditions of command had been improved in every respect. The reds everywhere encountered stronger resistance than before, and in spite of a marked numerical superiority suffered serious reverses during the first few days all along the line. The victory at Kuhmoinen on the 10th March was especially important for the whites, as the possession of that place was necessary for the protection and concealment of the concentration of the white striking force at Jämsä. Its

#### THE RED OFFENSIVE

defence was in the hands of the 1st North Häme Battalion, which had already beaten off the attack of the reds here.

Colonel M. Wetzer, who was in command of the Häme group, suspected, however, that the main offensive of the reds had not yet been launched. His appreciation of the situation proved right. In expectation of the attack the forces on the Vilppula front were grouped as follows: 700 men were stationed at Ruovesi, 350 men in the country about Väärinmaja between Ruovesi and Vilppula, 800 men at Vilppula, 350 men at Mänttä and 200 men as a reserve at Haapamäki. In the principal sector of the front, therefore, 2,400 white troops confronted 6,000 of the enemy.

According to the plan of the reds the main idea of the great offensive was a break-through at Vilppula in the direction of Haapamäki. During the first days of the offensive the activities of the reds in this sector were confined to attempts to mislead their opponents, for it was intended to await the results of the enveloping movements in the Kuru-Virrat and Eväjärvi-Vehkajärvi directions. However, nothing came of them; at Vaskivesi in Virrat the reds were repulsed on the 11th, and at Eväjärvi on the following day, while farther east, at Kuhmoinen, the red troops were shattered. Thus from the 10th onwards one piece of bad news after another reached the red staff at the front, the news from Satakunta being the most upsetting. As the Pori-Tampere railway, which was very important to the reds, actually seemed to be threatened, Colonel Svetchnikoff, adjutant of the Commander-in-Chief and actual director of operations, brought up his small reserves from Hämeenlinna and Riihimäki and despatched some companies to reinforce the Satakunta front.



THE UUSIMAA DRAGOONS AT JYVÄSKYLÄ, LEAVING FOR THE FRONT ON 6TH MARCH, 1918

#### RED OFFENSIVE IN HÄME AND SATAKUNTA

On the 13th March the decisive attack on Ruovesi and Vilppula was started. But the efficiency of the forces engaged was not great, and the attack achieved no result, except at Väärinmaja, where the whites were obliged to give way slightly in the course of the day when the buildings near their positions caught fire from the heavy bombardment. The reds made no effective infantry attacks, their efforts being nullified principally by the well-directed shelling of the white artillery. There was great dejection among the reds when they saw that their offensive had failed all along the line; and the situation indeed looked most unpromising. During these days the brief career of the red Commander-in-Chief, Eero Haapalainen, came to an end, and simultaneously with his dismissal, Svetchnikoff disappeared for a time for some reason. For a whole week the red army was left without any supreme command.

In spite of all difficulties Salmela began his preparations for continuing the offensive. He probably knew that there were only slender chances of success, but on the other hand he did not realize that the situation in North Häme had become exceedingly critical for the reds. Actually it was already too late, as the white army was ready to deliver its blow, and the white Commander-in-Chief was about to seize the initiative. The turning-point of the War of Independence had been reached.

## CHAPTER FOUR

# THE WHITES TAKE THE INITIATIVE

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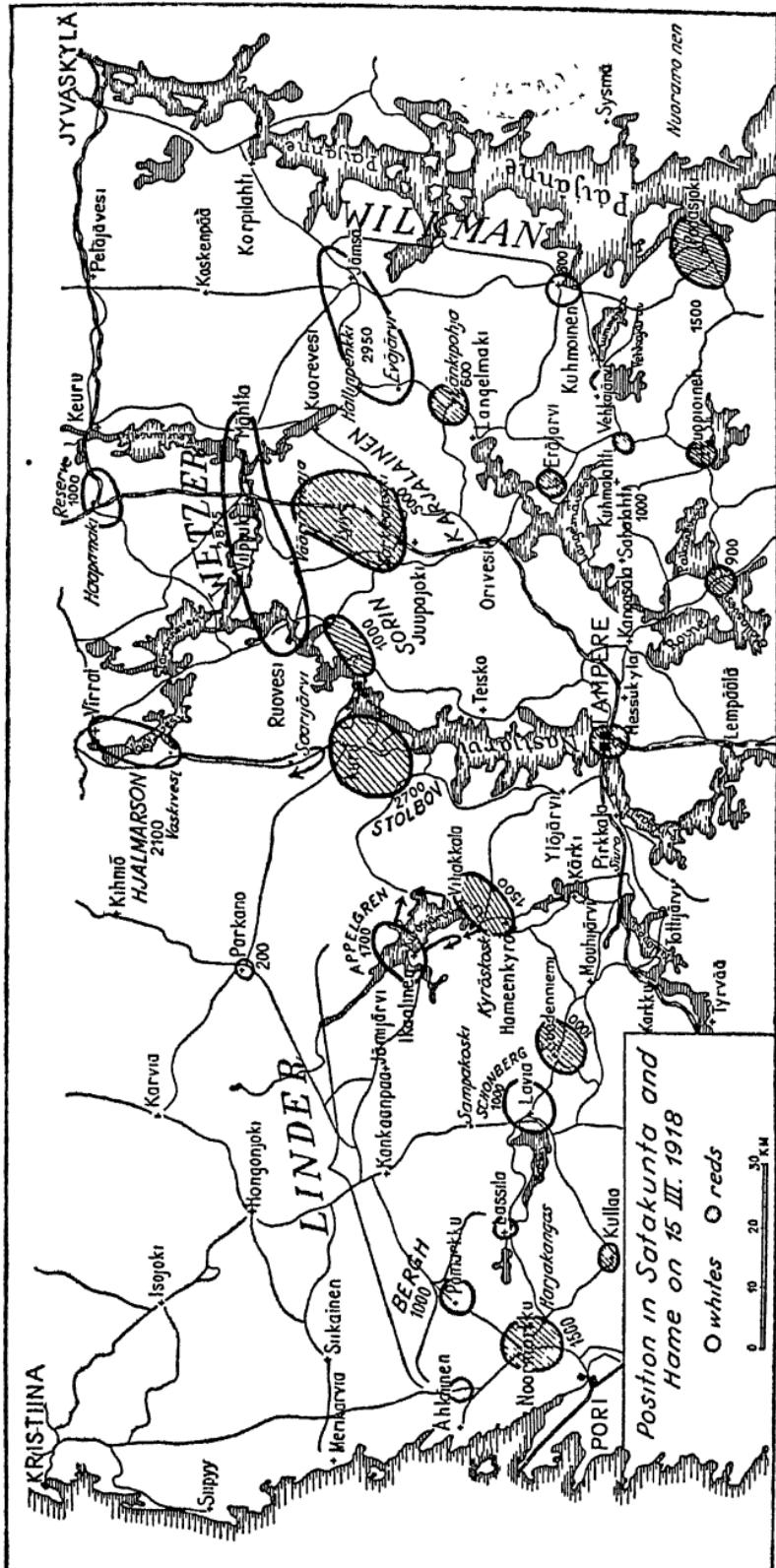
*The Offensive against the Northern Red Army  
and the Capture of Tampere*

*The Plan of the Commander-in-Chief*

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While the reds began to prepare for their second great effort, the whites hurried on with offensive preparations. The Commander-in-Chief, on the 27th February, had decided to attack in North Häme as soon as possible, for he realized that Vilppula, and at the same time Haapamäki, could be best defended by active intervention (see page 192). The next red offensive was to be expected in the immediate future, and would undoubtedly prove more difficult to repel than had been the offensive in February; there was a risk that the white troops would be worn down by a sustained defence. It was therefore necessary to anticipate the reds and take the initiative. "Attack is the best defence," said the Commander-in-Chief when he made his decision.

The objective of this offensive was to overcome the large red forces which were pressing forward like a wedge towards Vilppula and Ruovesi. The Commander-in-Chief believed that he could, without the knowledge of the enemy, concentrate a considerable force at Jämsä, whence



#### THE WHITES TAKE THE INITIATIVE

he intended to attack in the direction of Orivesi, take by surprise the main red force, and cut its communication to the south. In order to hold the enemy a frontal attack was to be made simultaneously at Ruovesi—Vilppula—Mänttä. In this way it might be possible to annihilate the main body of the enemy.

On the 3rd March an event occurred that necessitated all speed in the preparations. The German representative in Vaasa announced on that day that his Government had agreed to the request of the Finnish Government for a German military expedition to support the whites.

The Commander-in-Chief had been opposed to German troops being sent to Finland. He was firmly convinced that the white army was capable of defeating the enemy by itself and that a German auxiliary corps was unnecessary. Besides, the moral and psychological impression of its intervention would be very unfavourable if Finland obtained her liberty as a gift from Germany, with the consequence that the Finnish people would lose the self-confidence it needed to preserve its newly won position among the free nations. The people of Finland must purchase their freedom with their own blood. German intervention was also inadvisable, not to say dangerous, from a political point of view as Finland risked being drawn into the Great War on Germany's side. If the Allies were victorious it meant that Finland would have to share the hard fate of the vanquished; if, on the other hand, the Central Powers won, Finland in all probability became a German vassal state. Finland should therefore keep out of the conflict between the Great Powers. This was the guiding policy for the attitude and actions of the Commander-in-Chief, and from the first he had emphasized that independent Finland was neutral. Before the outbreak of



GENERAL K. WILKAMA  
(WILKMAN)



SENTRY ON GUARD AT THE GENERAL  
HEADQUARTERS AT SELNAJOKI, 7TH MARCH,  
1918

#### THE CAPTURE OF TAMPERE

the War of Independence he had already got into touch with the head of the French Military Mission in Petrograd, General Niessel, with regard to the purchase of arms.

The Government, however, was of the opinion that, in view of the human lives and the property which might now be lost, the war should be made as short as possible and had therefore requested German intervention. As a favourable reply had been received from Germany the Commander-in-Chief decided to hurry on the preparations for an offensive. To many people his decision seemed quite incomprehensible, for it meant sacrificing his own forces when the German expeditionary force was coming. The Commander-in-Chief, however, considered that the white army ought to gain a decisive victory before the German landing occurred. He thought it necessary that the Finns should gain at any rate one great success by themselves, otherwise there might be good reason to doubt whether the co-operation between the white army and its foreign allies would proceed on the basis of mutual esteem, a doubt which, from the Finnish point of view, was bound to react adversely both on the conduct of the war and on the position of the country after the war.

Apart from the political and psychological considerations with regard to the defence of the Vilppula front, another important circumstance favoured a swift offensive: in order to be able to co-operate with the Germans who were to land in South Finland it was essential to advance the front rapidly southward, and this had to be done before the snow and ice had begun to melt. Besides, it was important to liberate the districts occupied by the reds as soon as circumstances permitted.

The Commander-in-Chief therefore ordered the final

#### THE WHITES TAKE THE INITIATIVE

preparations for the offensive. The concentration at Jämsä was begun, the Häme and Satakunta groups were strengthened and a special group was stationed at Virrat to support the right flank of the Häme group. In its final form the plan of the Commander-in-Chief was as follows: the Häme group under the command of Colonel Wetzer (2,870 men, 33 machine guns, 4 minenwerfer and 7 guns) was to hold the main body of the enemy by means of a frontal attack on the Ruovesi–Vilppula–Mänttä line in a southward direction. The Jämsä group (3,750 men, 22 machine guns and 9 guns), commanded by Colonel K. F. Wilkman, was to advance via Längelmäki towards Orivesi and cut the most important communications of the enemy leading south. The Virrat detachment (2,300 men, 12 machine guns and 8 guns), under the command of Colonel H. Hjalmarson, was to capture Kuru and thereby support the right flank of the Häme group. After taking Kuru, Hjalmarson, subordinated to Wetzer, was to advance with his main force via Murole in the direction Korkeakoski–Orivesi.

In order to keep the main force of the enemy effectively engaged it was necessary to let the Häme group begin the attack in good time. In this Hjalmarson could co-operate effectively by pushing forward rapidly as far as Murole, and, if all went very well, an envelopment might be possible, Hjalmarson's and Wilkman's troops meeting in rear of the enemy's main force.

During this stage of the offensive it was necessary to prevent red reinforcements being sent to North Häme. For this purpose the Satakunta and Savo groups were to keep engaged the enemy forces operating on their fronts. The main part of the former group was also given another task directly connected with the great offensive: this was

#### THE PLAN OF THE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF

to advance from the Lavia–Ikaalinen line towards the Tampere–Pori railway between Karkku and Kulovesi.

The plan was straightforward and courageous. For the white army which had been created from bedrock it was a remarkable proof of confidence on the part of its Commander-in-Chief, as its organization and training had been of such short duration that its efficiency was by no means assured. Many thought the Commander-in-Chief's plan too daring. He, however, knew best both his own troops and those of the enemy. Although the position and conditions were of such a kind that he had to shut his eyes to many defects, it was most misleading to attempt to judge the efficiency of the white army by ordinary standards. Indeed, a leader who was not gifted with General Mannerheim's exceptional powers of judgement would, no doubt, have considered it impossible to carry out an offensive. The course of events was to prove, however, that the Commander-in-Chief was more far-seeing than those who recommended caution.

Before there was time to launch the offensive the reds started their second big offensive on the 10th March. This, of course, interfered with the preparations of the whites, but fortunately it was not necessary for the Commander-in-Chief to employ to resist it any great proportion of the forces which had been set aside for the attack. The victories at Kuhmoinen on the 10th and at Eväjärvi on the 12th March were also of great importance. Thanks to these successes the concentration at Jämsä could be completed. Hjalmarson's preparations for the offensive were upset to some extent by the attack of the reds on Virrat, but the pressure was greatest on Wetzer's group, the efficiency of which was seriously reduced.

The final order for the attack was given on the 12th

## THE WHITES TAKE THE INITIATIVE

March. In the first phase of the offensive 13,000 men were to be employed, of whom 1,000 men, two battalions of grenadiers, were stationed behind the front at Haapamäki as the Commander-in-Chief's reserve.

### *The First Phase of the Offensive 15th—20th March*

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The first big attack of the white army began on the morning of the 15th. Hjalmarson's detachment set off in two columns from Virrat and Vaskivesi. After advancing with slight skirmishes against the red outposts Hjalmarson's troops came in contact with the main forces of the reds north of Kuru. Their objective was to capture Kuru that same day, but when night fell the goal had not yet been reached. The men were tired out and the artillery—two 4-gun batteries—had not come up, so that Hjalmarson thought it wiser to postpone the attack until the following morning. The main force was withdrawn a slight distance for the night.

On the Satakunta front only Lieut.-Colonel W. Appelgren's group, stationed at Ikaalinen, was able to start advancing on the 15th, and it was soon checked, for encounters occurred with red troops, also advancing, on both sides of Lake Kyrösjärvi. The troops in Lavia under the command of Major E. Schönberg did not start till the 16th, as on the 14th they had repulsed after heavy fighting the attacks of the reds made from the direction of Suodenniemi. The troops—975 men—who held the

#### THE FIRST PHASE OF THE OFFENSIVE

coastal section of the Satakunta front, under the command of Major W. Bergh, had a purely defensive task.

On the front of the Häme group the red attacks continued with such intensity that offensive action was out of the question for the moment. After preliminary fire, mostly of artillery, the reds attacked at dusk on the 14th along the whole line from Ruovesi to Vilppula, according to plan and with great energy, but the whites beat them off without much loss.

On the 15th the reds renewed their attacks in the Ruovesi sector and nearly succeeded in breaking through in the neighbourhood of Väärinmaja. It was only with great difficulty that the whites were able to avert the danger, but the troops of the Häme group were by this time so exhausted that Colonel Wetzer considered it impracticable to begin his offensive on the following day. He asked for reinforcements, and on the evening of the 15th the Commander-in-Chief placed at his disposal a battalion—500 men—of the reserve at Haapamäki.

The red attacks at Ruovesi and Vilppula both hindered and helped the accomplishment of the Commander-in-Chief's offensive plan, for they were calculated to retain the red forces in a sack, the mouth of which was to be closed at Orivesi. Evidently the leaders of the revolutionaries had no suspicion of the danger which threatened from Jämsä. At the same time, however, it was feared that by this defensive battle Wetzer's troops would lose all power of attack.

In these circumstances it was necessary to launch the attack of the Jämsä group as soon as possible. The advance from Jämsä to Länkipohja began in great secrecy on the morning of the 15th so as to take the enemy by surprise. The first objective of the group was to annihilate the red

#### THE WHITES TAKE THE INITIATIVE

forces occupying Länkipohja, and for this purpose Colonel Wilkman disposed his main forces on the evening of the 15th to the north and east of it. Lieut.-Colonel L. Bergström was despatched with the main body of the Kuhmoinen group to Längelmäki to act as a screen towards Pohja and Eräjärvi. Captain H. Kalm remained at Kuhmoinen with three companies, altogether about 300 men, to protect the Kuhmoinen sector against attack from Pohja and Padasjoki. A squadron was to endeavour to make contact with the left wing of the Häme group via Kuorevesi. In order to cut the railway connection of the reds an attempt was made, and succeeded, on the 15th, to blow up the line near Orivesi.

Thus Colonel Wilkman had already made all the necessary preparations for attacking the red detachment at Länkipohja when he received the final order of the Commander-in-Chief on the evening of the 15th. The Jämsä group, which now proceeded to fulfil its important task, was composed of comparatively well-trained and organized troops. In addition to infantry it included the Uusimaa Dragoon Regiment of 625 men, and three batteries of artillery with 9 guns in all. The troops were in the best of spirits. On the morning of the 16th Wilkman's main force, in three columns, approached the village of Länkipohja, where the reds had taken up defensive positions, and the battle which takes its name from the village was opened. The reds offered serious resistance at first, but owing to fear of being surrounded they finally retreated, heavy losses having been suffered by both sides. The victory at Länkipohja was an honourable one for the commander of the group, Colonel Wilkman, and also for the troops, whose performance was highly creditable in the circumstances. The road to

#### THE FIRST PHASE OF THE OFFENSIVE

Orivesi was free and Colonel Wilkman now prepared to continue the advance towards it and against the communications of the reds to the south.

In the meantime Lieut.-Colonel Bergström had completed the march with his detachment from Kuhmoinen to Längelmäki, placed outposts against a red attack from the south and established contact with the main force at Länkipohja. The squadron on the right flank of the Jämsä group had reached Kuorevesi and obtained touch with Wetzer's force.

On the morning of the 16th and during the previous night severe fighting raged in the eastern part of the Satakunta front. Major Schönberg was killed, but the situation remained unchanged.

Hjalmarson had renewed the attack on Kuru on the 16th. By the evening the resistance of the reds was broken and they began to retreat, but Hjalmarson, who did not receive news of this, stopped the attack about the same time and withdrew his men to Saarijärvi, about 10 kilometres north of Kuru.

In retrospect the general situation on the 16th might seem favourable to the whites. The reds had suffered defeats at Länkipohja and Kuru, and the attacks of the main red forces against the front of the Häme group were becoming weaker. Nevertheless, from the point of view of the Commander-in-Chief, the situation on the evening of the 16th was quite disturbing. Hjalmarson and Wetzer were marking time. Wilkman, indeed, was continuing to advance, but for this very reason there was a dangerous gap between his troops and Wetzer's; the Jämsä group was in danger of being isolated in the presence of superior enemy forces. In order to obtain greater speed on the right wing the Commander-in-Chief gave

#### THE WHITES TAKE THE INITIATIVE

orders during the night 16th-17th that Hjalmarson's detachment should be placed under Wetzer's orders. Further, he considered it quite possible for Wetzer to take the offensive, as from information received the red forces to the south of Vilppula were preparing to retreat.

The news which came in during the morning of the 17th was calculated to raise high hopes: Linder's left wing was continuing its advance; Wetzer's left wing had begun to attack, Hjalmarson had occupied Kuru, abandoned by the enemy on the previous evening, and Wilkman's victorious group was moving forward towards Orivesi. It looked as if the main red forces were destined to be surrounded.

Such an assumption proved, however, to be too optimistic. Hjalmarson considered the condition of his troops to be so bad as to justify a delay in the advance, and his detachment remained in Kuru. Wetzer was unable to press his attack despite the fact that the Commander-in-Chief had placed at his disposal the other battalion of reserves from Haapamäki. The prospects of keeping the main body of the enemy engaged and so preventing its escape from the decisive blow seemed less hopeful, even should Wilkman succeed in capturing Orivesi on the 18th. The great trial of strength was approaching.

During the 18th the situation seemed to develop more favourably. The three columns of Wilkman's group had reached the area to the east of Orivesi by the evening of the 17th, its capture being the objective of the group commander for the next day's operations. If this succeeded, the way of retreat for the main red forces would be cut, the "sack" would be closed and the first task set by the Commander-in-Chief would be fulfilled. On the 18th, however, Wilkman's group, up till now so success-



(above) MATTI AND ILMARI LAURILA, DISTINGUISHED  
PEASANT LEADERS

(below) THE WHITES REPULSE RAHJA'S TROOPS AT LEMPÄÄLÄ

#### THE FIRST PHASE OF THE OFFENSIVE

ful, experienced its first serious reverse. When the troops resumed their advance in the morning the group commander received information that the Häme group had not yet taken Lylly. As he feared he might be forced to fight the enemy forces at Orivesi alone, Wilkman gave orders to stop the advance, but the greater part of his troops had already gone so far that the order failed to reach them. The station area was captured, but the reds obtained help immediately along the railway—incidentally an armoured train came up—and after a stubborn encounter the whites were obliged to retire. Wilkman now prepared for defence east of Orivesi, expecting that the enemy would take advantage of his isolated position and endeavour to overwhelm his force before Wetzer could arrive. The outposts to the south had still to be maintained, for the left flank of the group was threatened from Kuhmalahti and Pohja by strong red forces.

When the red forces in front of the Häme group began to retire on the night of the 18th, Wetzer at last attacked. The Vilppula and Mänttä troops pressed southward, pushing back the rearguard of the reds, who only put up a weak resistance. The Lylly railway station was captured in the evening without much trouble.

In the Ruovesi sector the whites waited to start their offensive until Hjalmarson's attack on Murole. But Hjalmarson, evidently exaggerating his difficulties and misconstruing the situation, continued to allow his men to rest at Kuru. There was no reason for these two days' delay at Kuru, for the resistance of the enemy had already been completely broken.

Owing to a counter-attack by a Russian detachment Linder's advance ceased altogether on the evening of the 18th. But his troops, who had marched and fought for

#### THE WHITES TAKE THE INITIATIVE

five days without a break, had succeeded in holding considerable red and Russian forces and had prevented their transfer to North Häme.

In the opinion of the Commander-in-Chief the situation on the evening of the 18th was not at all what he had planned. The wing formations had not carried out their tasks and the prey was escaping from the snare. Wetzer's troops, it is true, had at last attacked, but it seemed unlikely that they would establish contact with Wilkman's group even on the following day. The position east of Orivesi, in particular, aroused the anxiety of the Commander-in-Chief; he had to take into consideration that the enemy would presumably concentrate strong forces against Wilkman. The latter was given orders to hold the Korkeakoski-Längelmäki-Kuhmoinen road at all costs and to try to interrupt traffic on the Orivesi-Korkeakoski section of the railway. During the day a battalion of the Commander-in-Chief's reserve was placed at Wilkman's disposal, and reached Länkipohja that evening. At the same time the Commander-in-Chief assembled a fresh reserve at Haapamäki.

Wetzer was ordered to continue the advance towards Korkeakoski and, if possible, establish contact with Wilkman. Hjalmarson was instructed to hurry forward towards the Korkeakoski-Orivesi district with patrols out towards Tampere.

On the 19th the extreme tension was relaxed. Hjalmarson was able to occupy Murole, which had been evacuated by the enemy. Wetzer, after severe fighting, succeeded in taking Korkeakoski and Juupajoki, five kilometres to the south-east. The Wilkman group had remained in its positions east of Orivesi, awaiting an attack by the enemy, but no attack materialized and, instead, a

#### THE FIRST PHASE OF THE OFFENSIVE

battalion on the right wing of the group became engaged with a red detachment of 700–800 men retreating to the south from Juupajoki, and defeated it. At the same time sounds of battle could be heard approaching from the north. It was the arrival of Wetzer's troops, and Wilkman accordingly reported to the Commander-in-Chief that he intended to capture Orivesi on the following day, the 20th March.

The situation had thus appreciably improved on the 19th; the red front in North Häme was obviously completely broken. So far only 700 prisoners and 10 guns had been taken, but the Commander-in-Chief hoped for a further success on the following day in the neighbourhood of Orivesi, as he presumed that the enemy would renew his defence on the comparatively favourable ground in this district. The enemy had actually endeavoured to establish a new defensive front at Orivesi during the previous day, but on the evening of the 19th the main red forces were already at Tampere; and the whites had unfortunately been unable to keep touch with this rapid development.

The Commander-in-Chief's Army Order of the 20th was made on the assumption of a decisive battle at Orivesi. Wetzer's and Wilkman's forces were to attack in co-operation, while Hjalmarson's troops, which would apparently not reach Orivesi in time, were ordered to continue their march via Teisko along the eastern shore of Lake Näsijärvi.

On the 20th, however, the Commander-in-Chief was again doomed to be disappointed. The anticipated decisive battle at Orivesi did not materialize. Wilkman took the town in the morning without encountering any resistance, and soon afterwards his troops and Wetzer's established

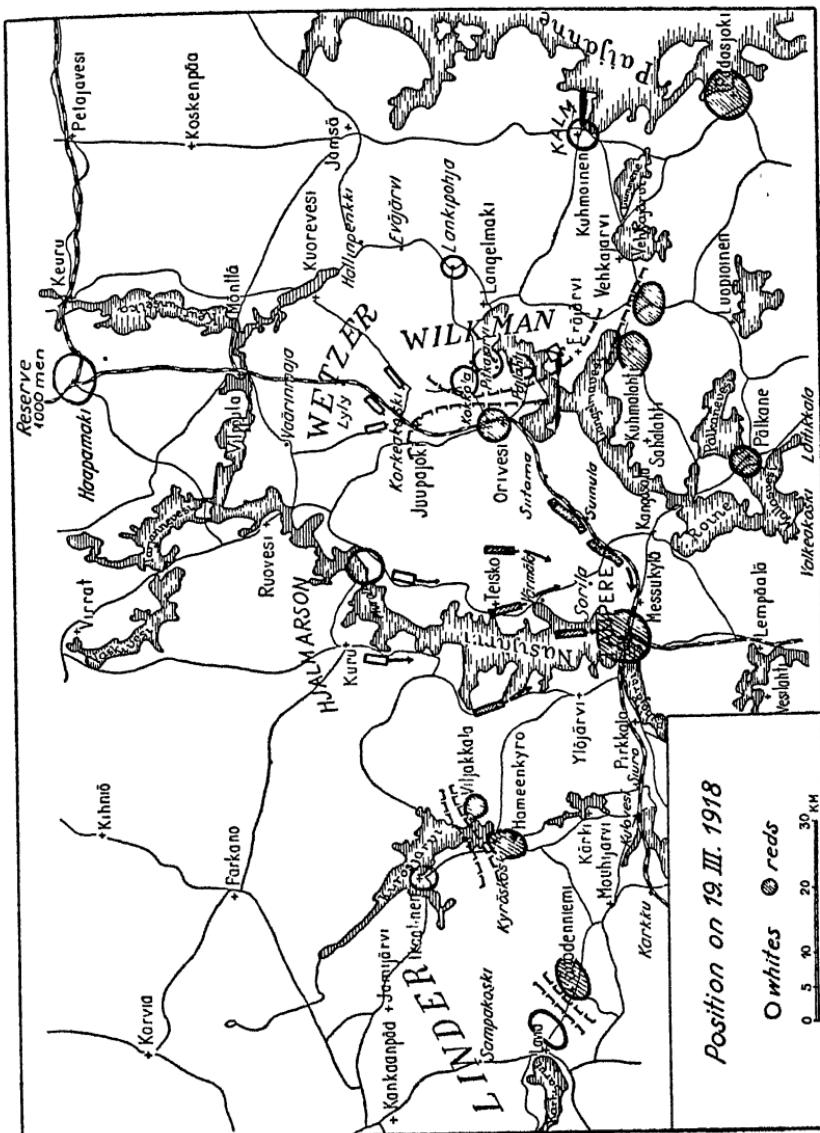
#### THE WHITES TAKE THE INITIATIVE

contact. The Hjalmarson detachment reached Teisko in the evening. In Satakunta the position remained unchanged. A further advance of Linder's troops was impossible for the moment, for the enemy had received reinforcements and repulsed all attacks. In the opinion of the Commander-in-Chief the situation on the evening of the 20th was that, although the reds had suffered a severe defeat, their main forces had avoided being surrounded. The prey had escaped from the snare. It appeared that the reds intended to retreat to Tampere and it was now necessary to endeavour to surround them there. The white offensive entered upon its second phase.

Let us now examine the development of the situation on the red side. It has already been mentioned that for a week the red troops were left without any supreme command.<sup>1</sup> Although discipline and general efficiency of the troops had deteriorated to a marked degree, Hugo Salmela, the energetic and capable commander of the red western front, decided to continue the offensive. Its main weight still lay in the direction of Ruovesi-Vilppula. Ensign Stolboff reported from Kuru on the 15th March that his detachment again amounted to 3,000 men, and he was instructed to continue the attack on Vaskivesi, which had been interrupted on the 11th. Reinforcements had also been despatched to Satakunta; the attacks on Lavia and Ikaalinen were to be continued. In the sector between the railway and Lake Päijänne, however, where the maintenance of supplies had already proved so difficult, the red forces had to remain on the defensive.

It seemed rather strange, in retrospect, that the reds did not suspect a white counter-offensive and that they

<sup>1</sup> See page 123.



#### THE WHITES TAKE THE INITIATIVE

constantly pressed forward northward in the direction of the railway without protecting themselves sufficiently to the east and north-east. It must not be forgotten, however, that their appreciation of the situation of the whites was entirely wrong; and that in general they possessed very imperfect information about their opponents throughout the whole course of the war. It is characteristic, for instance, that in the middle of March the general impression prevailed in the red camp that the Jägers were still in Germany. At the beginning of March the chief of the intelligence service of the red General Staff pronounced the opinion that the whites had already thrown all their available forces into the line. It was not believed that the whites had any reserves, and consequently no big white offensive was expected. The first warning did not come till the night of the 14th-15th March, and on the following morning a report in the newspaper *Työmies* announced that "the butchers" were concentrating large forces at Länkipohja. The point of departure was correctly given as Jämsä, so that the reds appear to have received advance information of the white's plan of attack, for actually Wilkman's forces only left Jämsä on the morning of the 15th. At the same time they failed to draw the right conclusions from this information, for during the 15th the outposts in the direction of Jämsä were not reinforced in any way. They evidently did not yet suspect what a deadly blow was to be dealt them from that quarter.

On the 16th, however, the Tampere staff received disquieting news of the white attack at Länkipohja, and its defenders begged for urgent support. But Salmela had no reserves, as all the available forces had been detached for the offensive against Ruovesi and Vilppula. In the afternoon news was received of the encounter at Länkipohja,

#### THE FIRST PHASE OF THE OFFENSIVE

and then of the crushing defeat and retreat of the reds. On the same day further bad tidings came from Kuru: Stolboff's strong detachment, on which great hopes had been placed, had retired in haste from that place, although the leaders tried in vain to make the troops take up new positions. Also the front was broken on both flanks of the main red forces in North Häme. In Satakunta, on the other hand, the reds had succeeded in holding the Viljak-kala—Järvenkylä line.

The situation grew worse. Large numbers of wounded were conveyed to Tampere and troops fleeing from the front poured into the town. They spoke of the superiority of "the butchers", of the frightful losses of the reds, and of the white advance from Länkipohja on Orivesi, threatening the railway, which was the line of retreat of the main red forces. On the evening of the 17th Karjalainen, the commander of the Vilppula group, began of his own accord to withdraw his troops from about Lylly and Väärimaja to Korkeakoski, and when Wilkman's detachment attacked at Orivesi on the 18th, Salmela ordered the retreat to continue. The red troops were panic-stricken, their one thought being to seek shelter in Tampere. Salmela was, however, able to collect a sufficiently large force to retake Orivesi with the support of the armoured train and so to protect Karjalainen's line of retreat. There could, however, be no question of attacking the isolated force of Wilkman.

The offensive which had been started with such great hopes was ending in a frightful collapse. Individual red guards and even whole companies undeniably displayed both valour and resolution, but the absence of competent officers made failure inevitable. Such chaos and terror reigned in Tampere on the 19th and 20th March that it

#### THE WHITES TAKE THE INITIATIVE

would scarcely have been possible to defend the town during the next few days. The losses of the reds—killed, wounded, prisoners and lost war material—were, indeed, comparatively small, but the morale of the red troops was shattered.

If the whites had been able to follow up the reds immediately, a decision would probably have been comparatively easy to reach. Unfortunately the condition of the enemy was not known and fresh forces necessary for the pursuit were not available. So it was that Salmela, imperturbable as ever, gained a few days' breathing space, of which he made effective use.

#### *The Second Phase of the Offensive* *21st—28th March*

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When the Commander-in-Chief planned the continuation of the offensive on the evening of the 20th March, he appreciated the situation to be as follows:

In Satakunta the reds had developed a stubborn defence; Linder's troops were marking time. In the country between the railway and Lake Päijänne the reds had concentrated either fresh troops or those which had already fought at Kuhmoinen and Länkipohja, at Kuhmalahti, Pohja and Padasjoki. The troops which had operated on both sides of Lake Näsijärvi and in the Kuru—Ruovesi—Vilppula—Mänttä sector were carrying out a retreat, very like a flight, in the direction of Tampere, and it was considered that the main enemy forces would resume the



(above) SKI DIVISION AT THE BATTLE OF SUODENNIEMI.  
THE MAN IN THE FOREGROUND WAS KILLED AFTER  
THE PHOTOGRAPH HAD BEEN TAKEN  
(below) FATHER AND SON

#### THE SECOND PHASE OF THE OFFENSIVE

defence in the Tampere district. These forces had now, if possible, to be surrounded.

It was consequently important to cut the communications of Tampere to the west and south and at the same time to continue the pursuit along the railway towards the town. The latter task was entrusted to Wetzer's group. The Wilkman group was ordered to despatch outposts in the direction of Luopioinen and Padasjoki and to advance with its main force to Lempäälä in order to cut the southern communications of Tampere. Linder received orders to advance to the Tampere-Pori railway and encircle Tampere from the west. The bulk of Hjalmarson's detachment, about 1,000 men, were placed at his disposal and were to march towards Viljakkala.

The Commander-in-Chief and his headquarters moved on the 21st March to Vilppula. The direction of operations were proving most difficult, as also were the problems of supply, owing to the length of the lines of operation, and signalling communications were very bad. In the course of the offensive the nerves of the Commander-in-Chief were often severely strained. The task of definitely breaking down the resistance of the numerically superior enemy with the available forces was not easy, especially as strong red relief attacks were undoubtedly to be expected from the south. Although fresh reserves had gradually been assembled with which to reinforce the offensive, their average efficiency was very low, and the conscripted Jäger troops which were being trained for the final offensive on the Carelian isthmus were not to be employed. The difficulty was further increased by the fact that a fresh enemy offensive in Carelia seemed imminent. On the evening of the 21st an appeal for help was received by telegram from the commander of the Carelian group,

#### THE WHITES TAKE THE INITIATIVE

but the Commander-in-Chief could send him neither men nor ammunition. However, to ease the pressure in Carelia, he ordered the commander of the Savo group to make an attack in the direction of Savitaipale.

In accordance with the Commander-in-Chief's order of the 20th March Linder began at once to prepare for his new offensive to be started as soon as Hjalmarson reached Viljakkala. He intended by means of a double envelopment to defeat the red forces in the neighbourhood of Kyröskoski and so clear the way to the Tamperë-Pori railway, which according to the Commander-in-Chief's instructions he was to destroy. Hjalmarson's support appeared essential, for the attack of the Satakunta group had come to a standstill and it was known that the reds had obtained reinforcements since the 20th. The red artillery, in particular, was superior to the white.

Hjalmarson's detachment left Teisko on the morning of the 22nd and began its march on Viljakkala. By noon on the following day the church village of Viljakkala was in the hands of the whites, and meanwhile Linder had begun his attack. On the 23rd March a severe and bloody battle was fought on the shore of Lake Kyrösjärvi, and by midnight the red resistance had been overcome, the detachment of 3,000 which had guarded the left flank of Tampere being thoroughly defeated, and the road to the Tamperë-Pori railway lay open; the eleven machine guns left on the field of battle gave evidence of the panic which had seized the reds.

While Linder's troops were fighting at Kyröskoski, Wetzer's and Wilkman's forces had continued their advance towards Tampere. Wilkman's group had continued on from Orivesi through Kangasala, and, at noon on the 24th March, reached Lempäälä, which it occupied

#### THE SECOND PHASE OF THE OFFENSIVE

after a struggle. Tampere was thereby cut off from the south. After detaching a protective force of two battalions and one battery to the south, Wilkman advanced northward towards Tampere on the 25th by order of the Commander-in-Chief. The reds employed all their available force and an armoured train against him, so that his advance was very difficult. Late at night the vanguard of the exhausted group reached the edge of the woods on the Hatanpää Plain, 2,000 yards south of Tampere. Simultaneously the main force of Wetzer's group had engaged in severe fighting east of Tampere. The open country made it difficult to advance, and the reds had an excellent defensive position on the Messukylä ridge, supported by ample artillery and machine guns, as well as by an armoured train. The attack only advanced slowly, but by the evening of the 25th the whites succeeded in taking Messukylä.

After the fighting on the 25th Wetzer's and Wilkman's troops had reached the stage when tactical co-operation between them seemed possible, but the absence of regular signalling communications was and remained an obstacle. On the 26th Wetzer only gained a little ground and Wilkman was unable to advance on the southern front of Tampere in spite of constant attacks; the fire from the favourable positions of the reds was, for the time being, too heavy.

While Wilkman's and Wetzer's main forces were fighting outside Tampere, the protective force at Lempäälä had to defend itself against strong attacks by red troops from the south, and the situation there began to look serious. The guarding of the flank on the Luopioinen-Padasjoki line was entrusted to a composite detachment of Kalm's battalion and a reserve battalion placed directly

#### THE WHITES TAKE THE INITIATIVE

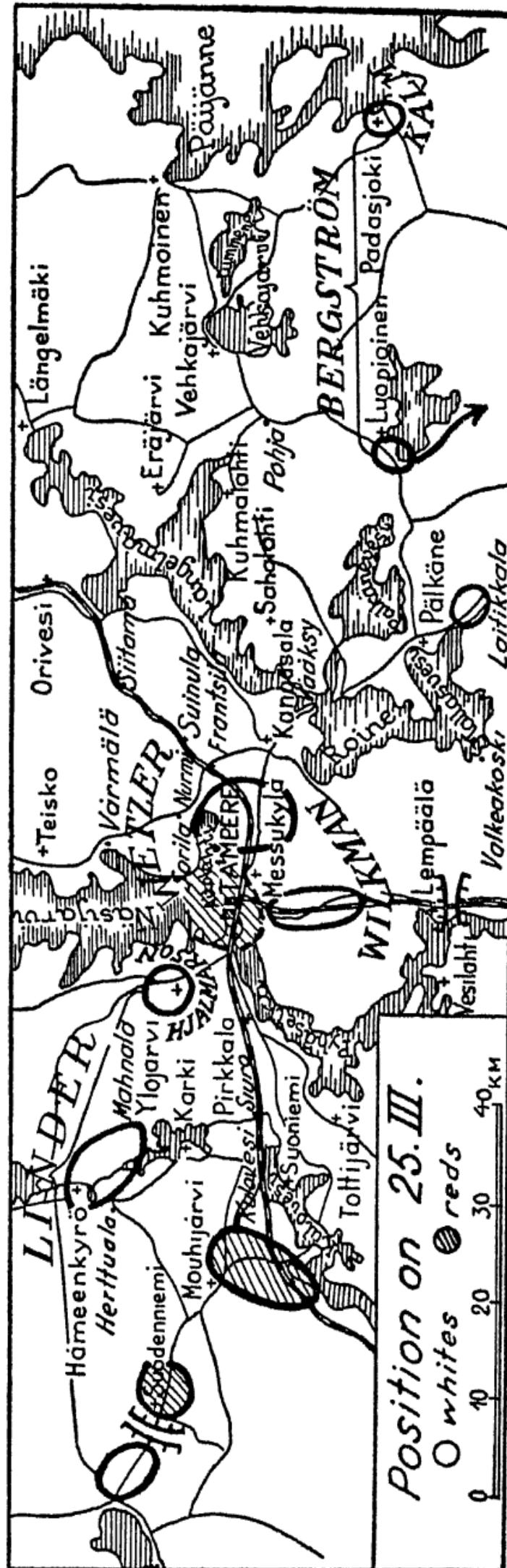
under the orders of Headquarters, with Lieut.-Colonel L. Bergström in command. By the 25th Captain Kalm had forced the reds to abandon Padasjoki, and on the 26th the Uusimaa Dragoons reached Pälkäne on their return from a raid towards Toijala.

As Linder's troops took Ylöjärvi on the 25th and Siuro railway station on the 26th, the communications of the town were also cut from the west. The encirclement having succeeded, the advance to Tampere continued.

The Commander-in-Chief had expected that the troops advancing towards Tampere would be able to press into the town without delay from all sides, and force the red troops within it, estimated at about 12,000, to capitulate; but the fighting was by no means so easy as supposed. Casualties had so thinned the ranks that reinforcements appeared to be needed to capture Tampere, and the only reserve in the hands of the Commander-in-Chief was the Swedish brigade of 350 men at Vilppula.

On the evening of the 26th the Commander-in-Chief had to make a grave decision. Disturbing news had come in earlier from the fronts in Savo and Carelia, and now the commander of the Carelian group reported that he could not hold his positions if he did not receive reinforcements. It was clearly of the first importance to force a swift decision at Tampere in order to release the troops engaged there for other tasks. The Commander-in-Chief therefore had to abandon the idea of allowing the Jäger infantry to complete its training for the final decision in Carelia, and part of it was sent to Tampere. He ordered the 2nd Jäger Regiment, which was nearest, to Vehmainen, whither the Swedish brigade was also sent. One battery was sent to Carelia and one to Savo.

This decision was both bold and consistent. The Com-



#### THE WHITES TAKE THE INITIATIVE

mander-in-Chief was convinced that half-measures would be ineffective, and at this moment the decisive point of the War of Independence was Tampere. All available forces must be concentrated there in order to gain a decision as swiftly as possible, in spite of the risk of a defeat for the gallant defenders of the Carelian front.

On the 27th March no great changes occurred round Tampere. Of the fresh reserves the 2nd Jäger Regiment was placed at Wilkman's disposal and the Swedish brigade at Wetzer's. Bad news was received from Lempäälä and from Bergström's detachment. Apparently the reds were preparing a big offensive from Hämeenlinna, and for this reason one of the most recently formed reserve battalions was sent to Lempäälä and another to Luopioinen. The 1st Jäger Regiment was also added to the reserve, for the Commander-in-Chief thought it essential to have a reserve of his own for the approaching decisive struggle.

The 28th March dawned, the bloody Maundy Thursday. Wilkman's troops were disposed for attack against the southern front of the town and Wetzer's against its eastern front. The fresh troops, the 2nd Jäger Regiment and the Swedish brigade, were sent into battle on Wetzer's left wing and received their baptism of fire in the hottest part of the fight, about Kalevankangas. After a very feeble artillery preparation the whites had stormed the enemy's positions in the face of a heavy fire from ably sited machine guns. Finally, however, the reds were obliged to abandon the Russian barracks and the cemetery. After suffering heavy loss the attacking force reached the south-eastern corner of the town. In spite of the successes gained, the result of the fighting on Maundy Thursday was confined to the capture of the strongly fortified ground in front of Tampere, and even this limited

#### THE SECOND PHASE OF THE OFFENSIVE

result was dearly won. The deeds of the 2nd Jäger Regiment during that day are among the most honoured of the Finnish War of Independence, but several of its companies had lost as much as 50 per cent of their numbers.

The hopes of General Mannerheim, the Commander-in-Chief, for a definite decision had been frustrated. On the evening of the 28th his view of the situation was as follows: the main forces of the enemy were stationed in West Finland and a large part were shut up in Tampere. Another part, the strength of which it was difficult to estimate, was operating north of the river Kokemäenjoki; this group might be expected to attack Linder's group in the rear with a view to relieving Tampere, which was surrounded. Further, the enemy was concentrating considerable forces in the Hämeenlinna region south of the Lempäälä-Luopioinen-Padasjoki line: these might also be expected to attack for the same purpose as they had already done at Lempäälä on the 26th.

The greater part of the white troops operating in Satakunta and Häme were besieging Tampere. A small part of Linder's force, about 1,000 men, guarded the coastal sector of the Gulf of Bothnia against Pori. At Lempäälä the protection to the south consisted of two battalions and one battery, altogether 800 men and 4 guns, while Bergström's detachment, about 1,500 men, guarded the area between Lake Roine and Lake Päijänne, also facing south.

The besieging troops round Tampere had suffered heavy losses and were so exhausted that a few days were needed for rest and reorganization. To organize the supply of ammunition also required a brief interval, a large shipment of ammunition having just reached Vaasa from Germany.

In these circumstances the Commander-in-Chief had

#### THE WHITES TAKE THE INITIATIVE

again to face a difficult decision on the evening of the 28th. The landing of the Germans was to be expected within the next few days, and it was thought at Headquarters that it might be advisable to stop the costly attacks and try to reduce Tampere by a regular siege. It would still be necessary to retain appreciable forces in the region of Tampere, partly for besieging the town and partly to beat off the relieving attacks of the reds, but it might be possible to start transferring the main forces at once to the front in Carelia and begin the decisive offensive there. Such a course might, however, interfere with active co-operation with the Germans, added to which an interruption of the attack on Tampere would have a very unfavourable moral influence. The Commander-in-Chief therefore decided to continue the attack. The fresh reserve, the 1st Jäger Regiment, was transferred to Kangasala, and the preparations for another attack were carried out with greater care than before.

In the meantime the supreme command of the reds had been reorganized. On the 22nd March a notice appeared in the red newspapers to the effect that the direction of the campaign had been placed "partly on a new basis". Eero Haapalainen was no longer "Commander-in-Chief of all troops in Finland". The administration was separated from the direction of operations, and the former was entrusted to Haapalainen, who thus became "War Minister". The conduct of operations was taken over by a triumvirate consisting of the People's Commissary Adolph Taimi, the regimental commander Eino Rahja, and the People's Commissary Evert Eloranta. Colonel Svetchnikoff had been left out.

In this hour of need a man of great personality appeared. Hugo Salmela, previously a worker, had already occupied

## THE SECOND PHASE OF THE OFFENSIVE

the post of commander of the western section of the front for a month and had performed his duties as ably as could be expected of a man without previous military training. With indomitable energy he now undertook the seemingly hopeless task of reorganizing the troops and building up a new defensive front about Tampere. The numerous staffs stationed in the town were powerless, and it was difficult for them to obtain a clear idea of the situation on the basis of the disastrous news which poured in from all sides.

The defence could not be spread too far from Tampere, for the supply of suitable troops was at first very small. At Kangasala, Suinula and Aitolahti some companies had been induced to stop retreating, and part of the reinforcements that had arrived on the 20th from South Finland were sent there. To guard the road to Lempäälä the picked and fairly efficient Helsinki A-company was posted at Kangasala. Salmela, however, despatched a considerable part of the reinforcements to Kyröskoski, from where they were ordered to start an energetic offensive. All these measures were correct from a tactical point of view. If Tampere was to be defended against the whites advancing from the north and north-east, the left flank had to be effectively protected and communications with Pori had to be maintained. The fact that Salmela endeavoured to achieve this by offensive action in the direction of Ikaalinen is evidence of sound judgement.

To make more effective the defence of Tampere, Salmela tried to extend conscription to the townspeople, and also obtained further reinforcements from Helsinki. In addition he urged the People's Commissaries to come to Tampere in order to help clear up the confused situation, for, to quote his own words, "chatterboxes" were still

#### THE WHITES TAKE THE INITIATIVE

needed in Tampere. Salmela's demand was obeyed. On the 21st March Manner, the Chairman of the People's Commissaries, and two other commissaries arrived. Salmela remained commander of the front, but the lower posts were filled by new men. Manner drew up pathetic proclamations; in high-flown language he urged the reds to defend "the heart of Häme", but drew a completely erroneous picture of the general situation.

Those companies which had previously been in the firing line could not be induced to return, so that the defence was short of troops, although there were nearly ten thousand men in Tampere and reinforcements were arriving constantly from the south. On the 21st the front was pierced at Suinula and on the 22nd defeats were reported at Vääksy and Viljakkala. Salmela, whose nerves had to stand the hardest of tests, worked day and night; he issued orders, implored, threatened and did his utmost to the last. The "death struggle" had begun.

Reports of disasters came in quick succession, and on the night of the 24th, with the news of the defeat at Kyröskoski, the situation already appeared hopeless. Salmela had emphasized the fact that the troops were not to withdraw to Ylöjärvi, but to Siuro: "the enemy must on no account be allowed to cross the river Kokemäenjoki". He realized no doubt that the whites would attempt to press forward to the south of Tampere by Siuro, Vesilahti and Lempäälä. From a strategical point of view his order was correct, but the red troops resting in Siuro ignored all "strategic considerations", and after holding a meeting decided to continue their retreat to Tampere; a decision which was immediately carried into effect.

On the 24th Lempäälä fell into the hands of the whites, which left Tampere entirely cut off from the rest of red

#### THE SECOND PHASE OF THE OFFENSIVE

Finland. Events on the 25th were marked by unsuccessful efforts by the reds to prevent the advance of the whites towards Tampere. On that day too the revolutionaries suffered defeat at Ylöjärvi, and the same evening the defence was broken at Messukylä. As already stated, Salmela possessed sound military judgement, and on the evening of the 25th he considered further resistance useless. In order to avoid further bloodshed he therefore proposed to begin negotiations for a capitulation. But his proposal was rejected unanimously by the staff, which decided, on the contrary, to continue the struggle to the bitter end. In spite of his personal opinion Salmela directed the defence during the next few days with the same irrepressible energy as before.

A strict military dictatorship was introduced in the town. Street traffic was carefully restricted, all lights were extinguished at night, and house searches were made partly to force red guards, who had concealed themselves, back into the ranks and partly to mobilize the rest of the male population for work to strengthen the defences of the town.

The reds were successful in holding their positions on the 26th and 27th, and the thunder of the guns from Lempäälä raised the courage of the defenders; it seemed that Rahja was really coming with a large relieving force. On the 28th, however, the position became desperate. The success of the whites on that day nearly broke down the resistance of the defenders, and in addition the reds lost their capable commander. Hugo Salmela was mortally wounded and there was no other red leader in the besieged town to replace him.

In retrospect it seems that if the whites had continued the attack on the evening of the 28th they might have

## THE WHITES TAKE THE INITIATIVE

forced the reds to realize the hopelessness of their position and to capitulate. As on the 19th-21st March, however, the white commanders did not realize that the reds had no reserves and were on the point of abandoning their resistance. Thus the reds once more obtained a breathing space and their hopes were raised.

### *The Repulse of the Counter-attack of the Reds*

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The Commander-in-Chief had given orders on the 28th March to the commander of the Satakunta group to protect the troops operating against Tampere from an attack from the Pori railway. Colonel Linder, who was in charge of these operations, decided to carry out his protective task by offensive measures, and on the whole he succeeded. An attack on Noormarkku by the right wing on the 31st March was indeed repulsed by the reds, but the latter allowed themselves to be held there and did not send assistance to Mouhijärvi and Karkku, where the white attack was crowned with success. Thanks to this satisfactory completion of their task by the Satakunta group, no further red attacks for the relief of Tampere were to be feared from the west.

In the meantime there had been severe fighting at Lempäälä. The red relieving attacks were led by Eino Rahja, who had left Tampere before it was surrounded. From now on Rahja was the actual leader of the northern front, and his authority among the reds seems to have been considerable. A flood of brusquely worded telegrams poured out from his headquarters at Toijala at this time,

#### REPULSE OF COUNTER-ATTACK OF REDS

addressed to the red staffs and ordnance departments in South Finland, demanding troops, guns, armoured trains, machine guns and ammunition, and these demands were to a great extent fulfilled.

The first attacks on Lempäälä on the 25th and 26th March were made with comparatively small forces supported by an armoured train, and it was not until the 30th that a carefully planned attack was launched. At the beginning of the attack the reds had at least 2,000 men, and in addition many machine guns, artillery, and two fully equipped armoured trains. Reinforcements continued to arrive during the next few days, so that on the 2nd April the attacking force already totalled 3,700 men with 30 machine guns and 15 guns, including the armament of the armoured trains.

The defending white force amounted on the 30th March to 10 companies, 2 squadrons and 1 battery, altogether 1,300 men and 4 guns. By order of the Commander-in-Chief, Colonel Wilkman had taken over the command of this force on the night of the 29th–30th. The red attack began the following morning and continued with such force throughout the day and following night that Wilkman was compelled to apply for support. The Commander-in-Chief sent him the 1st Jäger Regiment (less one battalion) and one battery, which, however, only arrived late in the evening, and in the meantime the defenders of Lempäälä had to resist strong pressure. In the course of the evening the reds had been able to push so far forward on the eastern wing that the white centre, near the railway, was in danger of being surrounded. Nevertheless the reds were not able to exploit the success they had gained, their attack was arrested for the time being and the fighting took on the character of position warfare. The Jäger regi-

ment arrived in time to assist the defence, and the rear of the army investing Tampere was protected.

### *The Capture of Tampere*

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On the 3rd April, the day on which the German Baltic Division disembarked at Hanko, the decisive battle began at Tampere.

The Commander-in-Chief had endeavoured in every way to convince the besieged insurgents that further resistance was in vain. Time after time he urged them to lay down their arms, but each time his promptings fell on deaf ears. There was no other course but to subdue the resistance by force.

A fresh attack was, however, out of the question without a few days' preliminary rest and reorganization. Owing to poor equipment the winter campaign had proved far more exhausting than it need otherwise have been, and the great strain which the fighting had imposed on the imperfectly trained troops had reduced their efficiency. Apart from that it was necessary prior to the attack to reconnoitre the enemy's position to select the points of attack and dispose the white troops accordingly. The co-operation of the artillery with the infantry, the arrangement of signalling communications and the replacement of ammunition also required careful preparation. All these measures were in the hands of the staff of the Häme group, for on the 28th the Commander-in-Chief had appointed Colonel Wetzer, its commander, to the command of all troops on the attacking front. The main



THE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF (X) WATCHES THE PROGRESS OF OPERATIONS AGAINST TAMPERE

#### THE CAPTURE OF TAMPERE

attack was to be made from the east; the Satakunta group stationed on the Tampere western front was given a defensive task to prevent red sorties, as the red positions at Epilä and Pispala were too strong to attack.

The preparatory artillery bombardment had begun according to plan on the morning of the 30th and was directed against the most important sectors of the enemy's positions. It continued during the following days and caused a number of fires in the town. The red artillery replied, but did no damage worth mentioning. Simultaneously the whites continued their reconnaissance work and gradually obtained a correct idea of the enemy's dispositions. The plan of attack was now given its final shape.

The battle area was divided into three sectors. Sector A (commanded by Jager Major L. Malmberg) extended from Lapinniemi to the Tampere-Takahuhti road; Sector B (commanded by Colonel E. Ausfeld) from this road to the Iidesjärvi watercourse; and Sector C (commanded by Colonel C. Grafstrom) from Iidesjärvi to Pyhäjärvi (see map on page 163). Several suggestions put forward by Colonel Ausfeld were adopted. In his opinion a surprise attack should be made in such a manner that the attacking troops could at once press forward into the centre of the town in strong, closed columns before the reds had time to blow up the bridges leading across the rapids. The leading detachments should then take up the defence to the west on the wide esplanade that ran north and south, while the clearing of the eastern parts of the town proceeded and was completed. According to the final order of attack, given on the 2nd April, Major Malmberg's troops were to enter the town from the north-east and clear the northern part of the area east of the rapids, Puolimatka Street and Häme Street being given

#### THE WHITES TAKE THE INITIATIVE

as the southern limit of this area. Colonel Ausfeld's troops were to enter the town from the south-east and clear the area east of the esplanade up to Major Malmberg's sector. Colonel Grafström's troops were to seize Ratina.

The final artillery bombardment was to begin at 2.30 a.m. on the 3rd April and the infantry were to attack half an hour later. The commanders of each sector of attack drew up their own detailed plans, with which all the officers were made acquainted. The preparations in other respects were carried out with as much care as circumstances permitted. The Commander-in-Chief moved with his staff to Vehmainen to watch the course of this decisive battle of the war, and he felt confident the white army would win it by its own efforts.

At 2.30 a.m. the guns opened fire, and the attacking troops were ready at their posts, awaiting the moment for the advance with tense excitement. "On the stroke of 3 a.m. the guns ceased fire," Colonel W. A. Douglas relates, "and after the last round a rocket was fired from Kalevakangas as a sign that the attack had begun. We could hear distinctly the infantry fire and the rattle of machine guns between the booming of the enemy artillery, which still fired at intervals, or of the white batteries, which now directed their fire on Pyynikki. But suddenly the cheering of the assault troops could be heard even at Vehmainen. At times it seemed to be drowned by the powerful chorus of the machine guns, at others it swelled and overpowered everything else. To those of us listening at a distance it seemed that the storming columns were overcoming all resistance."

Malmberg's attack got well under way at once, and after bitter fighting the northern parts of Tammela and

#### THE CAPTURE OF TAMPERE

Kyttälä were captured block by block. But the attempts at surprise by the Ausfeld and Grafström groups failed. The attack in the south-eastern part of the town soon came to a standstill and the whites had to continue the struggle very unfavourably situated and losing heavily. Only a single company succeeded in crossing the rapids. It was commanded by Jäger Captain Gunnar Melin and belonged to the 6th Jäger Battalion, the men being Swedish-speaking South Ostrobothnians. It forced its way into the centre of the town, broke down all resistance and occupied the Näsilinna Museum in the northern part according to plan; but there discovered it was completely isolated. After withstanding a siege of twenty-four hours in Näsilinna, and still seeing no other white troops, it was able to fight its way back across the ice on Lake Näsijärvi to the eastern side of the rapids. However, only a part of the gallant company returned; its losses, mainly during the siege in Näsilinna, amounted to no less than 34 killed and 50 wounded. Posterity will award a place of honour in Finland's annals to Melin and his brave Ostrobothnians. Not only was it one of the most conspicuous deeds of valour in the War of Independence, but, from a tactical point of view, it was of exceptional importance. Melin's assault and the capture of Näsilinna caused great perturbation among the reds and kept appreciable forces engaged for about twelve hours. In this way the main white forces attacking east of the rapids were given very effective indirect support.

On the morning of the 4th Ausfeld's and Grafström's troops again attacked, supported by the artillery. This attack was fraught with great danger; the reds had mined the bridges and the whites were able to cut only a few of the wires. Colonel Ausfeld's group made an assault across

#### THE WHITES TAKE THE INITIATIVE

the railway bridge over the rapids, the first objective being to capture Näsilinna, which was to serve as a base for the whites during their advance southward. The forcing of the railway bridge began at 9 a.m. The wires of the fuses were cut and the assault continued under fierce enemy machine-gun fire. One man after another dropped out of the attacking ranks, but the rest kept up the pace. The leading company seized Näsilinna, whence the reds had kept up a steady machine-gun fire against the attacking party, and then prepared, according to plan, to swing left in a southerly direction. At this moment the reds sent forward their armoured train, and its guns and machine guns caused the whites heavy loss. The situation was critical, some of the white troops being in disorder, but finally the armoured train found it advisable to retire, and soon afterwards was put out of action by a white battery. The attack continued, bloody fighting taking place in the streets.

Colonel Grafström's troops crossed the rapids by the same footbridge as Melin's company, but their task was not so easy as that of Ausfeld's detachment. Before forcing the bridge it was necessary to discover whether the roofing factory on the other side of the rapids was occupied by the reds, for in that case it would be almost impossible to cross the narrow bridge. The result of the reconnaissance being satisfactory, the attack was launched, but at the same moment machine guns opened from the Häme bridge, and artillery and trench mortars joined in. Several men were killed and fell into the rushing rapids, but the attacking group crossed the bridge and continued to press forward on the other side. Severe fighting continued throughout the day between the rapids and the esplanade, the reds defending with great courage despite their increasingly

#### THE CAPTURE OF TAMPERE

desperate situation. Many houses had to be taken floor by floor, from cellar to attic, with continuous casualties. By the evening the objective of the advance, the esplanade, had only been reached in the north and south. In the centre the reds still held the Town Hall and other buildings, the women's units of the red guards, in particular, taking a notable share in the defence.

While the action was proceeding, Major Malmberg's assault group continued to clear up the north-eastern parts of the town, east of the rapids. On the western Tampere front the Satakunta group confined itself, in accordance with the task assigned to it, to keeping the red forces engaged and supporting the actions of the other groups by artillery fire.

A decision was at last imminent. On the 5th the whites continued the capture of the western part of the town systematically. Considerable resistance was only encountered at the Town Hall on the Market Place, the occupants of which consisted mainly of Russians and women's units of the red guards. In the evening, however, this last stronghold was captured after a bloody encounter, the reds surrendering in crowds. At 8.30 p.m. three reds with a flag of truce came in to the whites to arrange for a capitulation. They were informed of the terms, but as they were not inclined to accept them the advance was continued at about 9 a.m. on the 6th, when, at last, the insurgents agreed to accept the terms of surrender. The struggle, one of the greatest battles in the history of the north, was at an end.

An army of 25,000 men had been put out of action; nearly 2,000 reds had fallen and 11,000 had surrendered. The war material captured included 30 guns and 70 machine guns. The whites had lost 600 killed. The

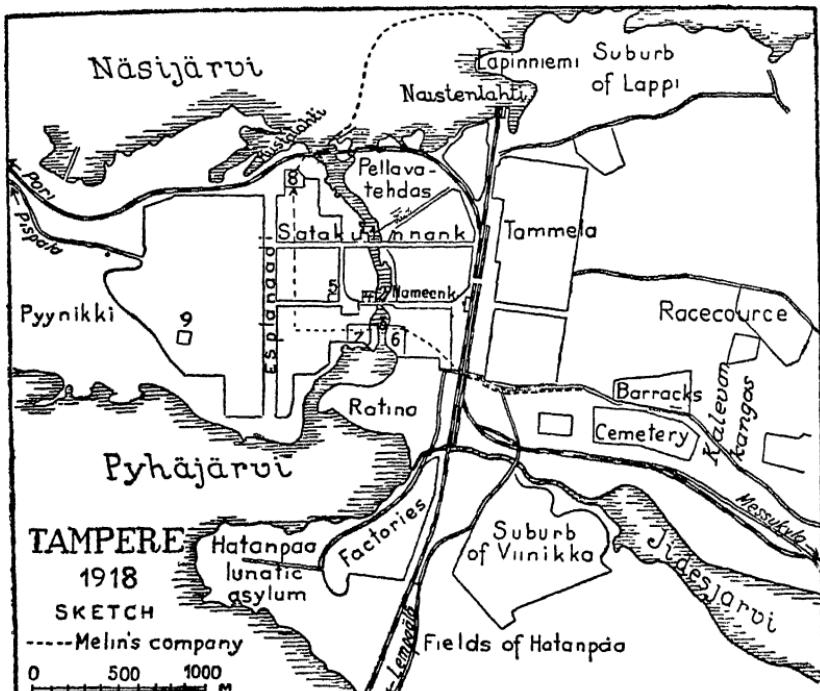
#### THE WHITES TAKE THE INITIATIVE

decisive victory in Finland's War of Independence had been gained. The best troops of the reds were destroyed and one of the principal hotbeds and main bases of the revolution had been captured. The fighting at Tampere was the great ordeal by fire for the white army; it had performed a hard task with success and honour and had overcome the resistance of the enemy. It had shown in a convincing manner that it was worthy of the confidence of the Commander-in-Chief, and had put to shame the sceptics and prophets of evil. The battle of Tampere had equally constituted the great test of the Commander-in-Chief. "The art of generalship, always difficult, was in this case perhaps more than ever a system of makeshifts [*ein System der Aushilfen*]," Colonel W. A. Douglas remarks apropositely: "his will for victory was the moving force which had to overcome not only the resistance of the enemy but, perhaps even more, the difficulties brought about by the inadequacy of the force available." During the great offensive and the decisive battle the white army felt that it was led by a strong will; it knew now that it was under the command of a great general. Confident of victory it prepared for its next great battle.

#### *The Final Phase of the White Defensive in Savo and Carelia*

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The time between the 15th and 20th March passed comparatively quietly in both Savo and Carelia, but about the 20th the reds started a period of fresh activity against



Explanations: 1 Satakunta bridge. 2 Hame bridge 3 Pond.  
 4. Tampere theatre. 5. Bank. 6 Clothing mill 7 Roofing felt  
 works. 8. Näsilinna. 9. Technical school.

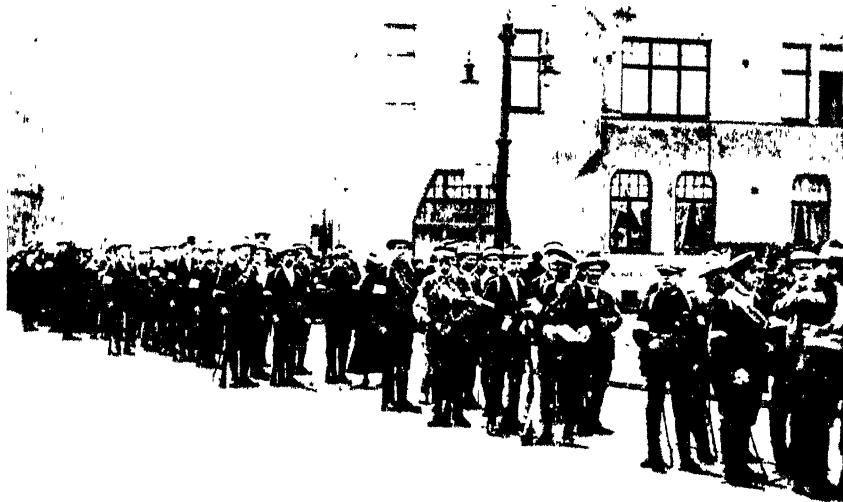
#### THE WHITES TAKE THE INITIATIVE

the centre and easternmost sectors of the front with a view to relieving the pressure on the western sector.

Although the reds were decidedly superior to the whites in every respect on the Savo front, they were not able to achieve any appreciable results, and at the beginning of April Major-General Löfström decided to start a decisive attack in the Mäntyharju sector. For this purpose 2,200 men were assembled, or more than half the Savo group, which amounted to 4,000. The attack began on the 5th April, and although the intended destruction of the red forces was not accomplished the whites thenceforward held the upper hand on this front. No further red activity was noticeable. The Savo group had successfully fulfilled its task, which had been to close the enemy's way northward, to keep considerable enemy forces engaged and prevent their transfer to other fronts, above all to Tampere.

On the 12th March the dangerous red-Russian attacks on the Carelian front ended in a last vain trial of strength at Ahvola and Valkjärvi. Then followed a period of comparative calm till the 20th March. The commander of the Carelian group availed himself of this respite to reorganize his troops and increase their numbers by calling up conscripts. At the end of March and beginning of April the strength of the group amounted to 7,000 men. The superiority of the enemy was no longer as great as before, in addition to which the whites had had time to strengthen and consolidate their positions.

When the Russians realized that it was impossible to pierce the front on the Upper Vuoksi, they had transferred the centre of operations to the right wing, to Rautu. It was their intention to fall upon the flank and rear of the whites via Kiviniemi. The date of the attack was fixed for the 26th, and the enemy was to be annihilated by



(above) SHIPS BLOWN UP BY THE REDS AT PORI  
(below) A COMPANY OF THE HELSINKI CIVIL GUARD

#### FINAL PHASE OF THE WHITE DEFENCE

a single surprise blow. Preparations were made and train-loads of troops and supplies passed in a constant stream from Petrograd to Rautu. Through their intelligence department the whites were warned in time of these offensive plans of the Russians. The danger seemed so imminent that the Commander-in-Chief gave the group commander permission in case of need to withdraw his troops to the north bank of the Vuoksi. But that was not necessary, for Captain George Elfvengren, a man of initiative commanding the sector of the front between Heinjoki and Lake Laatokka, resolved to anticipate the Russians by himself making an attack. His plan, approved by the group commander, was to cut the communications between Rautu and Petrograd on the Russian side of the frontier and surround the Russian troops which were being concentrated at Rautu station.

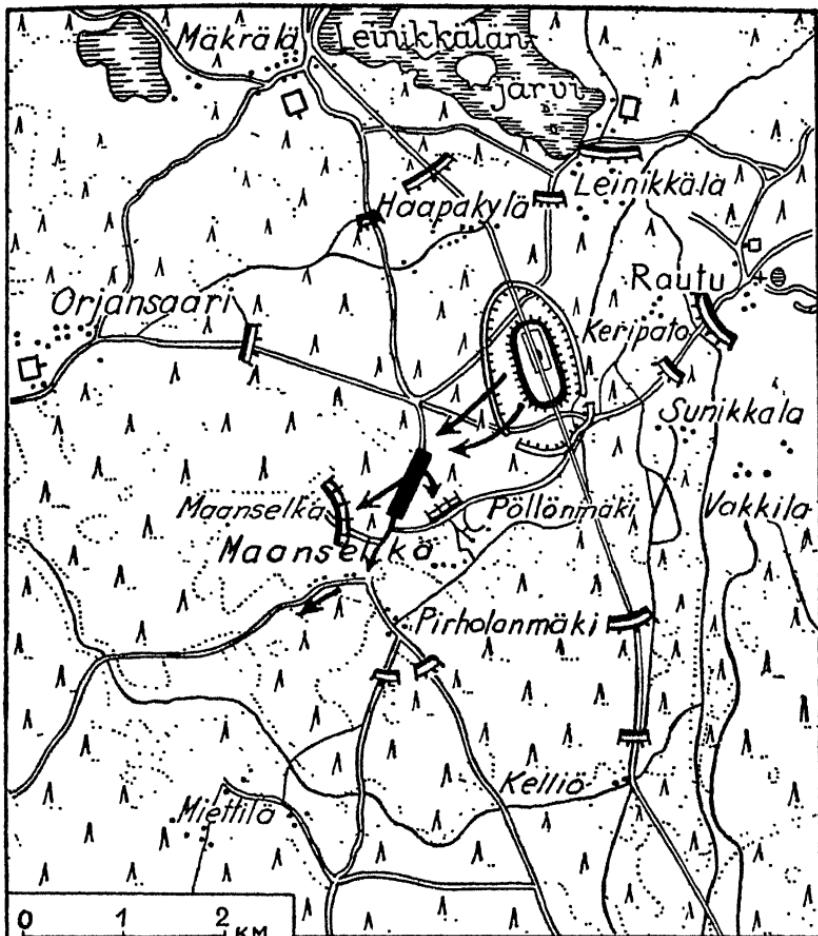
Although this courageous attack did not effect a complete interruption of the enemy's communications, it caused a dissemination of force and much embarrassment to the enemy, and the main attack against the Russian troops in the neighbourhood of the station at Rautu forced them to adopt the defensive. The whites closed in on the station district in the form of a horseshoe to east, north and west, but the complete encirclement and destruction of the enemy seemed impossible with such a comparatively small force. The enemy troops numbered about 2,000, including a small number of Finnish reds, and their artillery consisted of 15 guns: the whites had only 500 men and a single small gun. The idea of forcing the Russians into a trap was, however, too tempting; besides which if a decision was not achieved at once the Russians, who were constantly receiving reinforcements from Petrograd, would become even stronger. Elfvengren applied

#### THE WHITES TAKE THE INITIATIVE

for urgent reinforcements and the Commander-in-Chief gave orders for the 8th Jäger Battalion, formed at Sortavalä, under Captain K. L. Oesch, to be transferred to Rautu. It was to occupy Maanselkä and close the ring around the Russians on the south. Reinforcements were also received from the Mälkölä sector and from some training camps. When the final struggle started Elfven-gren had 1,000-1,200 men at his disposal, as well as an additional battery of two modern heavy howitzers..

Even before all the reinforcements had arrived Elfven-gren attacked, possibly rather rashly. The attacks on the 31st March and 1st April were fruitless. On the 1st April the 8th Jäger Battalion received its baptism of fire, and on the following night captured a train going from Raasuli to Rautu, five machine guns and 1,000 shells being taken. On the morning of the 2nd a relieving attack of the Russians from Raasuli was repulsed.

In spite of their serious situation the Russians remained inactive throughout the 1st April. They seemed to have no intention of retiring from the doom which threatened them and evidently relied on their superior force, their guns and the expected help from Petrograd. On the 4th April the Finns started the decisive attack, and the Carelians, in spite of heavy losses, pressed forward towards the enemy's trenches. The 8th Jäger Battalion was put to the severest test. Two of its officers fell and the majority of the other Jäger officers and non-commissioned officers were wounded. After nightfall the Russians, realizing their hopeless position, decided at last to retreat. On the morning of the 5th their vanguard with a closed column behind it succeeded in fighting its way through the weak encircling chain west of the station area and reached the deep open valley north-east of the village of Maanselkä,



- ◆ Positions of reds round Rautu station
- ◆ White outposts and positions before the encirclement
- Retreat of reds from station area
- ◆ Positions of whites at Maanselkä on 5.IV.

## THE BATTLE OF RAUTU

#### THE WHITES TAKE THE INITIATIVE

1,500 yards south-west of the station. There, however, it met unexpected fire. In the village of Maanselkä there was a small white detachment of between 50 and 75 men, some of whom were slightly wounded, with two machine guns. A position was taken up at Maanselkä manor, on the west side of the road leading to Raasuli, and soon the machine guns began to play havoc among the Russians. The Russian advance guard attacked repeatedly, but each time was forced back, until finally panic seized the Russians, who tried to escape in scattered groups.

Meanwhile the whites had received assistance, and the majority of the Russians were unable to escape from Rautu's "valley of death". The battle ended in a brilliant victory for the whites. The Russians had lost 400 killed, and 700 were taken prisoner, while the booty included 15 guns, 49 machine guns, 4 trench mortars and over 2,000 rifles. The losses of the victors were also very heavy, the 8th Jäger Battalion alone losing 104 killed, 156 wounded and 8 missing. The losses of the other troops amounted to 120 killed and 265 wounded. Thence-forward the Russians refrained from sending troops across the frontier. They had been given an expensive warning against interfering in the affairs of Finland.

The battle of Rautu paralysed the activities of the Russians and the reds on the Carelian front and the initiative passed entirely into the hands of the whites. The final great offensive was at hand, but while it was being prepared, minor local attacks were made in order to secure better points of vantage. The severe defensive struggle of the Carelians, now almost at an end, which had barred the way across the Vuoksi in face of a superior enemy, had been the hardest test of the War of Independence. They also had given a new and splendid chapter to Finland's

war history. The main forces of the white army were soon to appear on the Carelian front, where the final victory was now assured.

### *The German Landing*

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In describing the preparations for the War of Independence it was said that through its representative, State Councillor Edv. Hjelt, the Finnish Government requested at the beginning of December that German troops should be sent to Finland. The Germans had explained at that time that a decision on this question depended on the result of the peace negotiations at Brest Litovsk between Germany and Russia.

The peace negotiations were, however, broken off in the middle of February, and on the 18th of that month the truce expired, whereupon the Germans resumed operations on the Eastern Front. In the course of a week Estonia and Latvia were occupied. The Germans entered Tallinn on the 25th February.

On the 14th February the German Army Command urged Edv. Hjelt, the Finnish Minister in Berlin, to apply again for German troops for Finland, and on the same day a memorandum drawn up by Hjelt and Professor R. Erich was submitted to General Headquarters and to the State Chancellor. Hjelt was then, on the 21st, invited to come to Kreuznach, where the German headquarters was established, to discuss the matter with Field-marshal von Hindenburg and General Ludendorff. At this meeting the German army commanders promised to

#### THE WHITES TAKE THE INITIATIVE

start operations without delay on Finnish territory. To begin with a small detachment would be sent to Aland in order to capture the important group of islands and establish a base there for the subsequent main operations. Later a larger force would be landed on the west coast of Finland, possibly at Rauma.

As already stated, the Commander-in-Chief of the white army was of opinion that Finland ought to complete her task with her own forces. As, however, the Government considered it necessary for many reasons to end the war quickly and the question of a German auxiliary expedition had been decided, the Commander-in-Chief requested the German army commanders that, on setting foot on Finnish soil, the German troops should be placed under the Finnish supreme command. He also asked their commanding officers on landing to declare in a proclamation to the Finnish people that the German troops had come, not to take part in the internal struggles of the Finnish people, but to help Finland in her struggle with a foreign invader. Both these requests were fulfilled.

A true account of Finland's War of Independence cannot ignore the fact that the German auxiliary expedition was not undertaken for altruistic reasons, but, on the contrary, was inspired principally by the German endeavour to prevent the British troops who had landed on the Murman coast from reaching Petrograd and establishing a front against Germany or threatening the German Baltic coast from Cronstadt. Besides, from the point of view of German internal politics it was important not to allow Bolshevism to spread westward.

As their first objective the Germans chose Aland, which was to serve as a half-way station and base for the proposed landing in the region of Rauma. On the 5th March a

German squadron, consisting of two ships of the line, the *Westfalen* and *Posen*, under the command of Admiral Meurer, anchored in the roads of Eckerö. As a Swedish detachment under the command of Admiral Ehrensvärd was already on Aland, it was agreed that the Germans were to use the north-eastern Aland for their purpose, and on the 7th March a German battalion accordingly landed on the island. On the same day it disarmed a Russian force of about 1,000 men which was on the point of setting out for Turku. Furthermore, also on the 7th March, a representative of a detachment of Civic Guards formed on the islands, "the Island Volunteer Corps", which consisted of a couple of hundred men assembled on Värdö, asked the Germans for arms for his men and for assistance in organizing and training them. His request was granted. A Swedish officer, Lieut. Count C. A. Ehrensvärd, was appointed to command the Island Volunteer Corps, and it subsequently took part in several battles for the clearing up of South-West Finland. The Germans themselves began to prepare for the arrival of their division in Finland, intended to take place at the beginning of April.

What impression did the news of the German landing on Aland make on the red command? The leaders of the revolutionaries did not at once realize the extent of the danger, for it was not until the 14th March that seven companies were sent to the south-western archipelago to guard the coast. On the 24th March one of the military experts of the red general staff, an Estonian, R. Kiiman, was sent to Hanko to organize the garrison of the town, and by that time the reds had apparently heard of the preparations in Germany for despatching the so-called Baltic division to Finland. On the 27th the red general

#### THE WHITES TAKE THE INITIATIVE

staff gave secret orders for the transport at once of the machinery in the Hanko dynamite works to Helsinki. On the 3rd April it was reported from Hanko that the Germans had begun to land. The red general staff at once despatched an armoured train from Riihimäki to Tam-misaari and instructed the Uusimaa district staff to send all available forces to Karjaa. But Rahja had used up almost all the efficient companies in South Finland for the fighting at Lempäälä, and only one company could be despatched from Helsinki to Karjaa immediately. It was not till the morning of the 5th that another four companies could be sent westward from Helsinki. Including the local red guards the red forces at Karjaa then amounted to about 1,000 men. The situation was hopeless, however, for the main force of the Germans had already disembarked.

It was stated above that the Germans originally planned a landing in the neighbourhood of Rauma, but the ice conditions and the danger of mines made a landing so far north impracticable and Hanko had finally been selected as a landing base for the relief expedition to Finland. On the morning of the 3rd a fleet of transports under the command of Admiral Meurer reached Hanko, and the landing of the German Baltic Division took place on the 3rd–5th, the Russians and the reds being unable to put up any resistance. The German division was under the command of Major-General Count R. von der Goltz, and consisted of the following troops: the 2nd Guard Cavalry Brigade (commanded by Colonel von Tschirschky und von Boegeendorff), composed of the 1st and 3rd Guards Uhlan Regiments and a Saxon fusilier regiment (all on foot), the 95th Reserve Infantry Brigade (commanded by Major-General Wolf), composed of the 4th and 14th



(above) THE MUNICIPAL AUTHORITIES OF HELSINKI SALUTE  
GENERAL VON DER GOLTZ AFTER THE CAPTURE  
OF THE TOWN  
(below) RED PRISONERS AT HELSINKI

#### THE GERMAN LANDING

Jäger Battalions and the 3rd Reserve Jäger Battalion, a Bavarian battery of mountain artillery, two heavy batteries, a squadron of the 3rd Regiment of Cuirassiers (mounted), five companies of cyclists, a mountain machine gun detachment, and in addition pioneers, transport and commissariat. The total force amounted to about 9,500 men with 18 guns, 10 minenwerfer and 165 machine guns. A detachment of 400 Finnish Civic Guards, organized as a battalion, had been added to the division, these men having escaped from the Pellinge islands across the Gulf of Finland (see page 82).

Von der Goltz's original intention was to advance to Riihimäki and there cut the communications of the reds with Russia. According to later information, however, such considerable red forces were stationed in Riihimäki that the proposed operation appeared too risky. As the Finns had already emphasized the importance of relieving the capital quickly, von der Goltz chose Helsinki as his first objective. It had not been possible to establish closer co-operation with the white Commander-in-Chief when the operation of the Baltic Division was being planned.

At the German general headquarters, however, it was considered important to cut the Riihimäki-Viipuri railway as early as possible, and for this purpose more troops were sent to Finland. A strong combined brigade of 2,500 men under the command of Colonel von Brandenstein was formed in Tallinn. This brigade, consisting of the 225th Reserve Infantry Regiment, the 5th Battalion of Cyclists, half a squadron of cavalry and two batteries of artillery, was to land east of Helsinki and then to advance to the section of the railway between Kouvola and Lahti.

While the Baltic Division was disembarking a forward move was made to Tammisaari, and simultaneously a

#### THE WHITES TAKE THE INITIATIVE

detachment of three companies was sent to Karjaa to protect the flank. There an enemy force of about 1,000 put up a stubborn resistance which was only crushed on the 6th after reinforcements had arrived from Hanko. That evening Karjaa fell into the hands of the Germans, and on the 8th the main body of the Baltic division continued its march towards Helsinki.

In the meantime Colonel von Brandenstein had begun to carry out his difficult task. Owing to the small number of ships the transport to Loviisa had to be carried out in several instalments. The first transport, troubled by ice, did not reach Loviisa till the 7th April. Here, too, the landing proceeded without disturbance.

Thus the Germans began their operations on Finnish soil at the very moment when the white army was gaining its decisive victories.

## CHAPTER FIVE

# THE FINAL STRUGGLE

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*The Situation, Plans and Measures at the Beginning of April*

*The Whites*

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During the first week of April Finland's War of Independence entered upon a new phase. On the 5th the Russians had suffered a decisive defeat at Rautu and on the following day the remainder of the so-called northern army of the reds capitulated at Tampere. These victories gave the white army very considerable freedom of action, which was increased by the appearance of the Germans in the rear of the insurgents. Broadly speaking the Commander-in-Chief had the choice of two courses for continuing the operations. According to the original plan the final offensive of the white army was to be carried out on the Carelian isthmus and against Viipuri in order to cut the communications with red Russia. The alternative was to follow up the victory at Tampere at once and continue the advance direct to South Finland to co-operate with the Germans and destroy the red forces there. In the latter case, however, the way of retreat for the reds would remain open and it was feared that the enemy might retreat into Russia, causing great destruction, and escape annihilation. An escape of considerable

#### THE FINAL STRUGGLE

red forces would probably lead to prolonged frontier warfare and even perhaps bring about the active intervention of the Russian Government.

General Mannerheim decided to keep to his original plan. He decided to concentrate his main force in Carelia. Favourable vantage points had been safeguarded by the successful defence of the bridge-heads on the Vuoksi, and the movement of troops there had begun before the capture of Tampere. The transfer took about a fortnight, and after the battles at Tampere a period of rest was essential for training and reorganizing the troops and for obtaining ammunition. The reorganization included the formation of the Civic Guards into seven regiments, the intention being to make the composition of these troops similar to that of the Jäger battalions. Two regiments of grenadiers were formed of six battalions of grenadiers, recruited by conscription. In the artillery a new organization was introduced at the same time, and reserve formations for the detachments were established in their home districts.

The division of the white front line troops into four groups was no longer practicable, and to simplify the direction of operations two armies were formed, with Lake Päijänne as the boundary between them. Major-General Wetzer was in command of the western army, and the command of the eastern army was given to Major-General E. Löfström. The main task of the eastern army was to carry out the final attack in Carelia. The western army was at first to hold the captured line, and later to advance towards Riihimäki in co-operation with the Germans.



*(above)* TAIMI, RAHJA AND ELORANTA: THE TRIUMVIRATE  
OF THE RED HIGH COMMAND

*(below)* FIELD HOSPITAL

*The Reds*

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The leaders of the revolutionaries were faced by a difficult problem. They had had three bitter reverses at the same time, Tampere, Rautu and the landing of the Germans. Although the forces at their disposal were very considerable, 70,000 men with excellent equipment, more than 400 machine guns and over 100 field guns, the efficiency of the troops was very uneven and, on an average, very moderate. In the absence of competent organizers, instructors and leaders, the red guards could obviously not be developed in the same way as the white army. The red command had no reserves worth mentioning, and it was not possible to transport large forces from one front to another.

Owing to the localized system of command action was fairly independent on the various fronts, especially in East Finland.

At the beginning of April the red troops were disposed as follows: an eastern group was in Carelia, consisting of 15,000–20,000 men, and in Savo was a central group of 6,000 men, of whom, however, about 2,000 probably belonged to the reserve at Kouvolan. On the broken north-western front there were at least 2,000 men between Lake Päijänne and the Hämeenlinna–Tampere railway, while a group of about 4,000 men was engaged in an offensive against Lempäälä from the south; in the valley of the Kokemäenjoki River between Karkku and Pori there were at least 7,000 men. Besides these, there were at the least 30,000 men in South-West Finland, including the garri-

#### THE FINAL STRUGGLE

sons of Helsinki, Turku and other towns, and the troops along the coast between Turku and Rauma, at Riihimäki and other places.

At first the red command underestimated the strength and capabilities of the Germans, and even when the danger was realized there was no force of any strength to send against them. The landing of the Germans was concealed from the troops as long as possible by inventing stories of whites who had donned German uniforms and other similar tales, but this short-sighted policy was avenged. Confidence in the leaders was shaken and an exaggerated fear of the Germans, becoming at times panic-stricken terror, gained headway among the troops.

In the opinion of the revolutionary leaders immediate danger threatened from Tampere, as it was assumed that the whites would exploit their gains immediately and penetrate into South Finland. To enable South-West Finland to be evacuated, the whites had to be checked, and the concentration of the red forces near Toijala was therefore continued, as also were the attacks in the direction of Lempäälä and Karkku. The troops were told that the intention was to save their comrades, who were besieged in Tampere, and the fact that Tampere had already fallen was kept secret to the last.

Simultaneously the People's Commissaries and the rest of the principal revolutionary leaders prepared secretly to leave threatened Helsinki and move eastward to safer quarters. By the 4th several of the prominent red leaders had already left the town. On the 6th, when the Germans occupied Karjaa, the People's Commissaries and the "general council of workmen" followed their example, and on the 7th the general staff also left for Viipuri.

The plan of the revolutionaries was to withdraw all the

red troops from West Finland and form a new line of defence Toijala—Riihimäki—Helsinki. If this line could not be held the retreat was to be continued to the River Kymi. Under the protection of this shortened front the army was to be reorganized with the help of the Russians, after which a general offensive would again be started.

On the 3rd April, when news came of the landing of the Germans, the red command had immediately sent orders to Turku for the red troops in South-West Finland to be evacuated, but the order does not appear to have been obeyed. On the 7th, before leaving for Viipuri, the general staff despatched another order for the evacuation of South-West Finland, but neither did this have any effect. The disobedience may be partly explained by the fact that neither order made any mention of the landing of the Germans.

The supreme control of the revolution was reorganized on the 10th April, K. Manner being appointed sole supreme leader and given unlimited powers both in military and administrative affairs. Colonel M. S. Svetchnikoff was appointed military adviser to the Commander-in-Chief, after having disappeared from the scene for some time. Incidentally, he had already been sent to Helsinki on the previous day to organize the defence of the capital.

The revolutionary command now adopted urgent measures to transport the red forces from West Finland to the east, and in order to induce the troops to move a curious scheme was proposed: the red proletariat of Finland, after reaching Russia, was to found colonies in Olonetz or Western Siberia, and families were therefore to set out with their domestic animals, tools and household goods. But this plan of retreat could not be carried out in its original form, mainly owing to the fact that, in

#### THE FINAL STRUGGLE

spite of orders, the crowds of reds did not begin to retire in time. It was only gradually that the eastward move could be begun, and there was finally such a rush that no time was available to carry out the proposed wholesale work of destruction. Even so, corpses and smoking ruins marked the road of the fugitives to the east.

#### *The Operations of the German Troops up to the 21st April*

#### *The Advance of the Baltic Division to Helsinki*

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When the German Baltic Division had completed its disembarkation at Hanko, it began at once to prepare for the advance to Helsinki. It was particularly important to know what attitude the Russian fleet at Helsinki and the coastal defences would adopt towards the Germans in their attempt to take the capital. Peace between Germany and Russia had been concluded on the 3rd March, but on account of the ice the Russian fleet was still lying at Helsinki and it was by no means certain that the undisciplined crews on the ships would not oppose the occupation of Helsinki, in spite of the conclusion of peace, and cause great destruction in the town.

The German fear of this was not unwarranted, as although the news of the arrival of the Germans at Hanko had induced large numbers of Russian soldiers and sailors to leave for Petrograd during the next few days, it had also filled others with a desire to fight. Meetings of soldiers decided with typical Russian enthusiasm to fight "to the last drop of blood" and, if necessary, to destroy

#### OPERATIONS OF THE GERMAN TROOPS

ships, fortifications and war material. The peace of Brest Litovsk could not at first damp this patriotic revolutionary fervour to any great extent.

By degrees, however, more sober elements prevailed, and on the 4th April the Russians sent a deputation of six men, chiefly former officers, to Hanko to negotiate with the Germans. The Germans agreed at once to negotiate, and on the following day, the 5th April, the so-called Hanko agreement was signed. The Germans thereby guaranteed the complete safety of the Russian fleet and its crews on certain terms; among others that the Russians should immediately remove the entire crews from the ships with the exception of guards, from five to thirty men according to the size of the vessel. Further, according to the agreement the locks and sights of guns from all the ships and coastal defences, as well as the torpedo heads, explosive charges, etc., were to be collected at once in lighters and transports to be anchored in the outer roads. As a sign that the Russians had fulfilled the agreement and that the fleet and coastal defences desired to remain entirely neutral, they were all to hoist white and red flags when the German forces approached.

On the return of the Russian deputation to Helsinki the committee of the fleet confirmed the agreement after a stormy meeting, and the prescribed measures were then initiated. For safety's sake, however, the ice in the harbours was broken up by means of icebreakers, and in the course of the next few days all the submarines, mine-layers, transport vessels, cruisers and the larger armoured ships, sailed for Petrograd. Only four larger ships and some small worthless boats were left at Helsinki. The coastal defences had not been disarmed at all and would have passed into the hands of the reds in working condition

#### THE FINAL STRUGGLE

if some courageous whites had not secretly put them out of action.

The German land and sea forces had in the meantime begun to advance towards Helsinki. General von der Goltz and Admiral Meurer agreed that the fleet under the command of the latter should begin its offensive against the Helsinki naval front on the 11th April, the date on which it was calculated the Baltic Division would launch its attack on land.

As already mentioned, the division continued its advance towards Helsinki on the 8th with its main force. A small detachment, composed of two companies of cyclists, a platoon of cavalry and a battery of two guns, protected the flank along the Hyvinkää railway. The reds offered no appreciable resistance, and on the morning of the 11th the division reached the outer line of the land defences surrounding Helsinki at Leppävaara, where the division began to prepare to attack the red positions. The divisional staff was, however, approached by a captain of the Swedish army, S. af Ekström, who was serving at the Swedish Consulate in Helsinki, and some representatives of the reds, in order to negotiate for a capitulation. General von der Goltz allowed the reds a few hours' truce to enable them to discuss the terms of capitulation.

Helsinki would probably have fallen into the hands of the Germans without a struggle had not one of the People's Commissaries, sent by his colleagues in Viipuri, arrived on the 11th. At a meeting in the People's Palace this man succeeded in persuading the troops to fight; it was resolved with enthusiasm to defend Helsinki to the last drop of blood. The excellent Commissary, however, did not place himself at the head of the troops he had inspired, but returned to Viipuri the following night.

#### ADVANCE OF BALTIC DIVISION TO HELSINKI

Svetchnikoff, as already mentioned, had visited Helsinki a couple of days earlier to reorganize its defences, but as he was unable to persuade the Russians to break the Hanko agreement he had returned to Viipuri.

This decision to fight, provoked by a revolutionary leader, was foolish from a military point of view. Apart from the 1,500 men who had already retired in disorder from their positions at Lepävaara on the evening of the 11th, the reds had about 2,500 men in Helsinki, mostly new companies of oldish workmen who had joined the red guards unwillingly and had neither training nor war experience. It was absurd to oppose the German division with such forces, especially as the Germans were also able to operate from the sea, and the reds do not seem to have suspected that ten fully armed companies of Civic Guards, secretly trained, were also ready to take a hand in the struggle at any moment.

As the reds did not inform General von der Goltz by the time stipulated on the 11th that they were willing to surrender, he ordered his division to start the offensive at 4 p.m. The whole of the main red defences with a great many guns fell into the hands of the Germans, whose losses were very few. On the 12th the main attack on the town was carried out by the reinforced brigade under Colonel von Tschirschky und von Boegendorff and was directed against the district between the sea and Töölö Bay, while an enlarged regiment under Major von Reden advanced in the direction of the railway.

Two Jäger battalions led the attack on the town, their objective being to follow through the main streets to the south as far as the sea and establish contact with the naval forces. The resistance of the reds was very feeble; only in a few buildings did they attempt resistance, and

#### THE FINAL STRUGGLE

it was generally easily overcome. Towards the evening of the 12th the Helsinki Civic Guards came from their hiding-places and helped to clear the southern part of the town. By nightfall only the workmen's and a few isolated buildings in the centre of the town were held by the reds.

In the meantime the squadron under Admiral Meurer had anchored and landed a detachment of about 400 men. On the 13th the Germans, supported energetically by the Helsinki Civic Guards, completed the capture of the capital, both the field artillery and guns of the fleet co-operating effectively in the struggle. Although the destruction caused by the bombardment was considerably less than in Oulu and Tampere, and later in Viipuri, many buildings were badly damaged. Immediately after midday the Germans penetrated into the workmen's quarters from the north, and soon afterwards the reds gave up the fight. The German Baltic Division had captured the capital of Finland.

Individual red snipers still continued to resist, and on the morning of the 14th there was another small but brief struggle. At noon that day General von der Goltz entered Helsinki in state, accompanied by two squadrons of cuirassiers, a company of Jägers, a Guards' squadron of Uhlans, a company of Saxon fusiliers, a company of pioneers, and a battery of Bavarian mountain artillery.

The German division then prepared to continue its advance northward towards Riihimäki.

*The Advance of Colonel von Brandenstein's Brigade to Lahti*

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Von Brandenstein's reinforced brigade, which had landed at Loviisa, had been instructed to advance to the Kouvola-Lahti section of the railway and cut the line. The commander had very indefinite information as to the position of either the reds or the whites: he only knew that strong red forces were in the neighbourhood of Kouvola and that the whites held the Taipalsaari-Heinola line.

The transport of troops from Tallinn to Loviisa was accomplished in instalments, and when the second transport arrived on the 11th von Brandenstein had two battalions, two companies of cyclists, two batteries, and a half-squadron of cavalry at his disposal. Although conscious of the fact that large enemy forces surrounded him on all sides von Brandenstein courageously decided to advance on Lahti. The Germans, dispersing red detachments and driving them northward, rapidly approached the railway, but the isolated situation of the brigade deep in the enemy's territory was very precarious. The long line of communication with the base at Loviisa could not be protected, and according to intelligence received, a counter-attack by the reds was expected from the north, east and west. Loviisa, attacked from various quarters, nearly fell into the hands of the reds again, but at the most critical moment a detachment of about 400 Civic Guards arrived from the islands and provided such a strong reinforcement that the town was held.

Von Brandenstein had in the meantime reached the

#### THE FINAL STRUGGLE

Petrograd railway between Uusikylä and Kausala. At Uusikylä a comparatively thorough destruction of the railway was undertaken, but the reds now brought up large forces, supported by armoured trains, against the Germans, forcing the latter to leave the railway on the 15th and withdraw to Kuvanto. On the 16th von Brandenstein allowed his exhausted troops to rest, while he brought up a battalion and half a battery which had arrived in the last transport. On the morning of the 17th he got into touch at last by wireless with General von der Goltz. As the divisional commander stated that he would direct his main force northward from Helsinki, von Brandenstein decided to capture Lahti; and on the 19th the town was taken after a long and severe struggle. The reds, after suffering heavy loss, fled westward in disorder. An attack supported by an armoured train, which the reds had sent from the vicinity of Kouvola, was repulsed at Villähti. The Germans took 500 prisoners, 35 machine guns, 12 guns and large quantities of war material and railway material for the Loviisa railway. On the following day, the 20th April, the Germans established contact with the Finnish western army, parts of Major H. Kalm's battalion reaching Lahti from the north (see page 191). At the same time connection by telephone was established with the headquarters of the white army at Mikkeli.

Von Brandenstein's detachment had thus performed the first part of its task in a brilliant manner. But more difficult problems were still before it. Not only was an attack by superior red forces to be expected from the west, but his brigade was also threatened in the rear by strong red forces from Kotka. When von Brandenstein reported his situation to the divisional commander, the latter despatched a force under the command of Captain Röder on

#### ADVANCE OF BALTIC DIVISION TO RIIHIMÄKI

the 18th April via Porvoo to Loviisa. This force consisted of a company of cyclists, a Finnish battalion and half a battery of artillery, and on the following day another detachment, composed principally of two companies of cyclists, was despatched by rail to Porvoo, whence it was to march on to Loviisa on the 21st. Major Hamilton, who arrived on that day, took over the command and advanced at once towards Kotka to make a diversion.

On the 22nd the reds started an attack on Lahti from the west.

#### *The Advance of the Baltic Division to Riihimäki*

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After the capture of Helsinki the commissariat of the Germans became considerably easier, the transport communications now being altered to pass through it. Here, too, the main forces of the Baltic Division were assembled for the further advance northward. The 3rd Guard Regiment of Uhlans was still halted near the church village of Helsinki to guard against an attack from the north. The Helsinki Civic Guards, to whom the Germans gave effective assistance in organizing and training, were about to take over guard duties in the capital entirely.

General von der Goltz had fixed Riihimäki as his first objective, and as the capture of this place did not seem to need the whole division, he sent Major-General Wolf there with a Jäger battalion, two dismounted cavalry regiments, a troop of cavalry and three batteries. The advance began on the same day that Röder's and Hamil-

#### THE FINAL STRUGGLE

ton's detachments left for Loviisa to assist von Brandenstein's force.

On the 22nd April Wolf's detachment took Riihimäki after severe fighting, and the main force of the reds retreated towards Hämeenlinna, while parts of it withdrew towards Lahti.

The Germans had now two important points on the railway, Lahti and Riihimäki, in their hands. The retreat of the red "western army" to the east was cut off, especially as the left wing of the white western army was in touch with von Brandenstein's force. The only question was whether this dam of troops at Lahti would be able to hold out. As soon as the white western army could advance from the valley of the Kokemäenjoki River and establish contact with Wolf's detachment, the ring round the red western army would be closed.

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#### *The Operations of the White Western Army up to the 21st April*

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The area of the western army under Major-General Wetzer extended, as stated above, from the Gulf of Bothnia to Lake Päijänne. According to the Commander-in-Chief's order of the 7th April its task was to hold the line Vesilahti-Palkäne-Padasjoki, capture Pori, and at the same time prepare to advance towards Helsinki through Hämeenlinna and Riihimäki with its main force, clearing the Turku-Pori district with a smaller detachment.

Major-General Wetzer divided his army's area into



*(above)* RED LEADERS AT THE BATTLE OF LAHTI  
*(below)* RED MACHINE-GUN EMPLACEMENT, DESTROYED  
AFTER A HEROIC RESISTANCE

9

#### OPERATIONS OF THE WHITE WESTERN ARMY

two sectors with Lake Pyhäjärvi as a boundary. The western sector was under Major-General E. Linder, the eastern under Colonel H. Hjalmarson. The difficulties of communication, however, soon made it necessary to subdivide the eastern sector; the Vesilahti-Lempäälä front between Lake Pyhäjärvi and Mallasvesi being entrusted to Hjalmarson and the eastern part being placed under Lieut.-Colonel L. Bergström.

The reds attacked the Vesilahti-Lempäälä front in strength, with about 4,000 infantry supported by several dozen machine guns and 15 pieces of artillery. The offensive was at first launched from Toijala, and then from Viiala, and it was directed by Eino Rahja, half the members of whose staff were Russians, including two officers. However, the white defence held out, although the troops had a rough time, especially from the fire of the enemy's superior artillery.

Between Mallasvesi and Lake Päijänne Lieut.-Colonel Bergström's troops had no difficulty in protecting the line Valkeakoski-Hauho-Tuulos-Kurhila facing south. In Major-General Linder's sector the reds made comparatively serious attacks on the 8th and 9th April in the neighbourhood of Karkku, but they were successfully repulsed, and on the following day he was informed that the reds were preparing to abandon the Pori neighbourhood. As it was feared that before leaving they would cause great destruction in the industrial area at the mouth of the River Kokemäenjoki, Linder ordered the Pori regiment, operating on the right wing, to make an attack on Pori. On the 12th this attack was delivered against feeble resistance by the red rearguard, and on the following day the town was taken. During the following days small white detachments moved forward along the valley of the

#### THE FINAL STRUGGLE

Kumo on the heels of the retreating enemy, and the whole of the Tampere–Pori railway and the Rauma railway fell into the hands of the whites.

Meanwhile the Island Volunteer Corps had started operations in Finland proper. This corps of about 250 men, which had been organized and trained at Vardö and at Åland under the command of the Germans and Lieut. C. A. Ehrensvärd, had, with the 14th German Jäger Battalion, which had landed on Åland, seen hard fighting at Korpo and Nagu. The German detachment was then transported by sea from Korpo to Hanko, after which the Island Volunteer Corps continued towards Turku alone. The landing of the Germans placed the red troops about Turku and Uusikaupunki in such a precarious situation that they found it advisable to withdraw gradually to the north-east. Thus the Island Volunteer Corps was able to enter Turku on the 13th April without meeting resistance and, increasing to 800 men by rapid recruiting, to continue its advance along the Turku–Toijala railway. After encounters with the red rearguards the corps reached Loimaa on the 21st April.

On the extreme left wing of the western army the 1st North Häme Battalion, under the command of Major H. Kalm, had, contrary to orders, begun to move southward from Padasjoki on the 14th April. Actually Kalm had received orders to march with his troops to Kuhmoinen and thence across Lake Paijanne to Mäntyharju, but he had refused on the plea that the troops did not wish to be transferred. The march continued in the same direction, although Kalm was threatened with a court-martial, and on the 16th April he occupied the Vääksy Canal. During his continued advance southward his detachment was in danger of disaster, but was rescued by

reinforcements from the army group east of Lake Päijänne, to reinforce which Kalm's battalion had been detached. On the 20th he reached Lahti, which had been occupied by the Germans the previous day. Here German and Finnish troops were in contact for the first time, and thus the daring adventure ended happily. Kalm was not court-martialled, but was awarded Finnish and German decorations for his bold and successful "Lahti operation".

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*The Offensive of the White Eastern Army and  
the Capture of Viipuri*  
*Planning and Concentration*

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The final military objective of the War of Independence was to crush completely the forces of the enemy. In order to attain this objective it was important to cut the communications of the reds and the Russians with Petrograd as early as possible. The Viipuri-Petrograd railway was the principal route of the enemy, his main artery both in a material and moral sense.

From the first the Commander-in-Chief had been planning the offensive which would have to be made in Carelia, but circumstances had obliged him to turn his attention to other quarters. When North Finland had been cleared, the need for organizing an army capable of attack had become most urgent, and, simultaneously with this work of organization, it had been essential, first of all, to safeguard the important cross-country railway from Haapamäki to Pieksämäki. The opening offensive of the white

#### THE FINAL STRUGGLE

army had been based upon it, and that offensive had led to the defeat of the red forces operating in North Häme and the capture of Tampere, and thereby to the final safeguarding of Haapamäki. Now, however, the Commander-in-Chief was able to concentrate on Carelia, the stubborn and self-sacrificing defence of which had preserved useful starting-off points for an attack on the red communications.

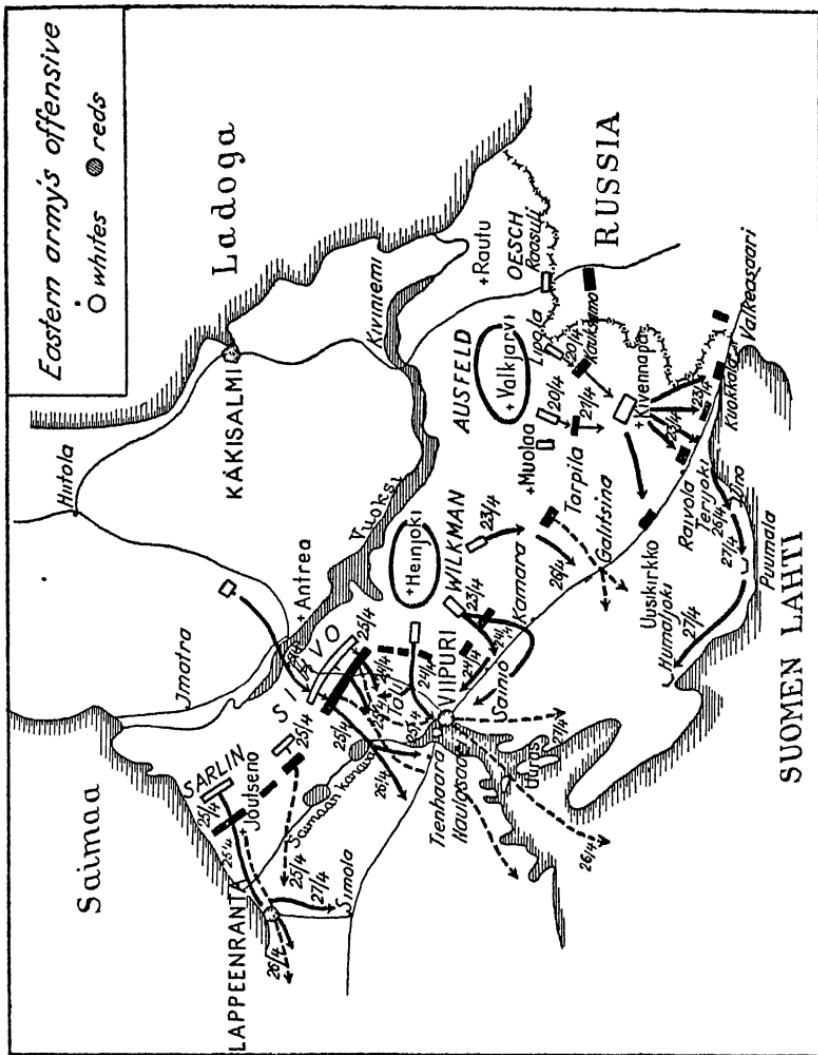
While the clearing of South-West Finland was left to the Germans and the western army, the eastern army, commanded by Major-General E. Löfström, had the task of carrying out the main attack, i.e. to cut the communications with Russia, capture Viipuri and destroy the red eastern army. The decisive blow was to be aimed at the enemy forces that faced the Carelian front, consisting altogether of about 18,000 men supported by 81 pieces of artillery, and the fortress artillery at Viipuri, Ino and Uuras. Their main force, about 7,000 men and 25 guns, was about Antrea, in the sector between Ahvola and Näätsälä. In the Lappeenranta-Joutseno area there were about 2,000 men and 12 guns, near Muolaa about 1,000 men and 4 guns, and in the area Raasuli-Kivennapa-Rai-vola-Valkeasaari about 5,000 men and 40 guns. There were also about 2,000 men in Viipuri and a number of smaller detachments on the Viipuri-Petrograd railway.

The headquarters of the white army had obtained fairly accurate information regarding the dispositions of the enemy forces. On the basis of this it seemed best to concentrate the main attacking force near Heinjoki. To the south-west and south of that place the enemy was weak, and from it a surprise blow could be dealt in the direction of Näätsälä against the right flank of the enemy's main body. It also offered the shortest route both to the



(above) HALT AT TAMMISUO DURING THE ADVANCE ON  
VIIPURI

(below) PRISONERS SLAUGHTERED BY THE REDS IN A VIIPURI  
PRISON



#### THE FINAL STRUGGLE

Viipuri-Petrograd railway and against the comparatively weakly held south-eastern Viipuri front. About the 11th April news was received of movements of Russian troops on the other side of the frontier. The Commander-in-Chief consequently planned for effective protection for his left flank and rear, by sending a separate group to attack from Rautu towards the railway, cut the latter close to the frontier and hold it facing east.

To carry out these offensive operations the bulk of the white army had to be concentrated in Carelia. During the phase of position warfare there had been three Carelian regiments with small artillery detachments. During the week 14th to 21st April three Jäger brigades, the North Häme Regiment, the Jäger artillery brigade (22 guns) and two field telegraph detachments were transferred to Carelia, and as these were joined by the Vaasa and North Savo regiments on the 26th April, 12 of the 18 regiments of infantry available took part in the last offensive of the War of Independence.

According to the final plan Colonel Ausfeld's group (about 6,000 men and 8 guns) was to advance with its main body through Kivennapa towards the Viipuri-Petrograd railway, blow up the railway bridges in the neighbourhood of Raivola and guard the front to the east and south-east. Major-General Wilkman's group (about 7,300 men and 18 guns) was to deliver the main attack. It was to advance from the neighbourhood of Heinjoki through Tali and cut off the enemy forces from Viipuri north-west and north of the town. With a part of its force the group was to take Viipuri by surprise and with another part to cut the railway between Viipuri and Raivola. Lieut.-Colonel Sihvo's group (about 4,500 men and 15 guns) was instructed to hold the enemy's main strength, which

#### THE OPERATIONS OF AUSFELD'S GROUP

lay in front of it. This group was also to prepare to attack Viipuri from the north. The army reserve (about 1,200 men) was at first at Inkilä.

In co-operation with this main attack Captain Förberg's group (about 1,000 men and 4 guns) was to advance west of Lake Saimaa and by holding the enemy forces there protect the right flank of the eastern army. The group was first to take Savitaipale and then prepare to capture Lappeenranta.

The concentration proceeded according to plan. The troops belonging to Wilkman's group were taken in barges from Antrea to Pölläkkälä, whence they were transferred to about Heinjoki.

The reds had obtained no information regarding the transfer of the main forces of the white army to the east and therefore did not yet expect an attack in Carelia; on the other hand they feared an offensive towards the Savo railway about Kouvolta. The attack by the white army in Carelia was consequently a complete surprise.

#### *The Operations of Ausfeld's Group*

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It was important to secure the eastern flank before the main attack began. For this purpose the Army Commander ordered Colonel Ausfeld to start his advance on the 20th April. In addition to the red forces ahead of him, Ausfeld was obliged to take into consideration those stationed near Muolaa and also the Russian troops at and south of Raasuli. There was also the possibility of a strong Russian attack from Valkeassari; according to reports

#### THE FINAL STRUGGLE

from secret agents there were about 10,000 Russian troops in readiness just beyond the frontier.

Of the battalions at his disposal Colonel Ausfeld only employed two to protect his flanks. The eastern flank about Raasuli was guarded by the 8th Jäger Battalion under Jäger Captain K. L. Oesch, with the assistance of local Civic Guards. The glorious action of the battalion in the battle of Rautu had sadly thinned its ranks, and with no more than 400 men it had to keep in check an enemy many times superior in numbers. Towards Muolaa protection was given by a battalion of the 1st Carelian Regiment.

On the 19th April the main body of the group began its advance. On the 20th, a detachment consisting of two battalions and led by Jäger Captain E. G. Kumlin, pushed back the reds after a three hours' battle, from Kauksamo towards Kivennapa, and on the 21st a detachment, led by Jäger Captain E. F. Hanell and consisting of one battalion and two companies, crushed the enemy's resistance at Tarpila, capturing 2 guns and 4 machine guns. That same morning Kivennapa also fell into the hands of the whites after a slight struggle, and here the main body of the group was assembled on the 22nd to prepare for the second stage of the advance, their objective being the Viipuri-Petrograd railway. Colonel Ausfeld divided his troops into three columns, the right column being directed on Uusikirkko, the centre on Raivola and the left on Terijoki and Kuokkala. As reserve the group commander held back one battalion, to be employed either in the direction of Raivola or Terijoki as the situation demanded.

On the 23rd April the advance was begun, the reds withdrawing without offering any noteworthy resistance. It was not until reaching the immediate vicinity of the

#### WILKMAN'S GROUP AND CAPTURE OF VIIPURI

railway that hard fighting began. In consequence of a thaw the artillery had been delayed, so that for the greater part of the day the infantry had to rely on its own resources. Nevertheless the whites gained the victory, and the stations of Raivola, Kellomäki and Kuokkala were occupied.

The following day, the 24th April, Uusikirko and Terijoki were taken, which gave to Ausfeld's group possession of a length of 25 miles of the railway. The superiority of the group over the enemy opposing it had enabled its task to be performed swiftly and with comparatively little loss. Ausfeld's success evidently made a deep impression on the Russians, whose main force, 6,000 men, in the neighbourhood of Levashovo, had remained inactive.

Ausfeld's group was now instructed to clear the eastern part of the Carelian isthmus and to provide protection against Russia, while the main forces of the eastern army were fighting in the neighbourhood of Viipuri.

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#### *The Offensive of Wilkman's Group and the Capture of Viipuri*

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While Ausfeld's group was approaching the Viipuri-Petrograd railway on the 23rd April, Major-General Wilkman's group began its advance. This was carried out in three columns: Colonel U. von Coler's column (5 battalions and 10 guns) was set the task of capturing the enemy's positions at Lyykylä, 4,000 yards east of Tali, then to cut the Viipuri-Antrea railway and the roads leading north from Viipuri, and to attack the town from the north. Lieut.-Colonel E. Jernström's column (4 battalions

#### THE FINAL STRUGGLE

and 6 guns) was to capture the railway stations of Kämärä and Säiniö and then to attack Viipuri from the east. Major H. Savonius's column (1 battalion, 1 squadron and 2 guns) was despatched towards Muola to protect the left wing of the group. The group commander kept one battalion and one squadron in reserve.

Von Coler's column by a surprise attack seized the strong positions occupied by the reds at Lyykylä and Aittolahti, and on the 24th April at dawn reached the railway on either side of Tali. The reds, supported by an armoured train, tried their utmost to hold the railway, but the assault by the Jäger troops again drove them from their positions after close fighting, hand-grenades and bayonets being used. The 7th Jäger Battalion, commanded by Jäger Major E. Heinrichs, especially distinguished itself, forcing its way to Tali station.

At about 5 p.m. von Coler moved his main body on from Tali towards the northern Viipuri front, while small detachments endeavoured to cut the enemy's communications with the town. Despite opposition it reached Papula about 10 p.m. The enemy opened a heavy fire with guns, machine guns and rifles from the western side of the Papula Bay, but von Coler decided to attack across the bridges leading to the town, the assault to start at midnight after a brief artillery preparation. Some officers who had been down to the shore reported, however, that the bridges were under heavy machine-gun fire and that an assault across them was not practicable. As artillery officers also reported that the wooded and hilly ground prevented the field guns from firing upon the nests of machine guns on the opposite shore, von Coler at 11 p.m. cancelled his order to attack and decided to await the arrival of Jernström's column.

Jernström's force should by this time have been facing the south-east Viipuri front, but its advance had been slower than expected. His troops had taken the stations of Kämärä and Säiniö, but were so exhausted owing to the stiff resistance of the reds that their advance could not be continued until the morning of the 25th.

The third column of Wilkman's group, under the command of Major Savonius, had made its way against severe opposition to the neck of land between Lake Muolaanjärvi and Lake Äyräpääanjärvi.

The battles on the 23rd and 24th April were a remarkable success for Wilkman's group; nevertheless the plan, approved by the army commander, to capture Viipuri by surprise had to be abandoned, and instead a systematic siege of the town was begun.

Actually the operations of Wilkman's group on the 23rd and 24th had not been in accord with the intentions of the Commander-in-Chief. Von Coler's column was far too weak both to cut the communications of the main red forces with Viipuri and simultaneously attack the town. According to the Commander-in-Chief's instructions the former task was the more important, but its execution was not even attempted; and the attack on Viipuri which von Coler considered to be his main objective had not been feasible. It would undoubtedly have been better to strengthen von Coler's column, if the army reserves had permitted it, with instructions to cut the communications of the main red forces, on the flank, leaving the attack on Viipuri entirely in the hands of Jernström's force. That force, however, was also too scattered. Its attack on the station at Kämärä can scarcely be regarded as a success and it would have been better to march the whole column by the shortest road to Viipuri.

#### THE FINAL STRUGGLE

In the meantime, for the reds, the situation began to look increasingly hopeless; communications with Petrograd had been cut and attempts to obtain help from the west had failed. When, on the 24th April, von Coler's troops pressed forward through Tali, thereby seriously threatening the communications of the main red forces, the commander of the red front, A. Backman, that same evening gave the order to retreat. During the night the main red forces accordingly retired to Viipuri, and von Coler's troops had not advanced sufficiently far to the west to cut them off. Based on the Viipuri fortifications and with a Russian colonel as adviser, they now put up a desperate defence. While the whites were approaching Viipuri a white detachment which had been organized in secret in the town tried to assist the capture of the town by attacking the red defenders in the rear, but their efforts failed, and, forced to surrender, they were interned in the castle of Viipuri.

As the sound of battle approached, the revolutionary leaders, the dictator Kullervo Manner, the People's Commissaries and the general staff decided to flee to Petrograd. The decision was taken on the 25th and was carried out the following night.<sup>1</sup>

On the evening of the 24th the commander of the eastern army, Major-General Lofström, had given Lieut.-

<sup>1</sup> In his memoirs Colonel Svetchnikoff mentions that this flight began on the 27th, a date which has been repeated in books dealing with the War of Independence. Svetchnikoff's statement is not, however, consistent with the truth. His obvious intention is to put the leaders' flight in a slightly more favourable light by delaying it for twenty-four hours. According to quite reliable sources it can be ascertained that the shameful decision was made on the 25th and carried out during the following night. Before leaving, Manner issued the following order: "The eastern batteries at Viipuri are to prevent the enemy's advance towards the road leading to Koivisto until the authorities in charge of the town give further orders, or the defence of

## WILKMAN'S GROUP AND CAPTURE OF VIIPURI

Colonel Sihvo an order to attack. But it came too late, and when Sihvo's troops did begin an attack, on the morning of the 25th, the enemy had already abandoned his positions, and only the rearguard of the reds was met.

It may be pointed out by way of criticism that the army commander should have started the attack of Sihvo's group at approximately the same time as that of Wilkman's group, and also that General Löfström was too optimistic in believing that Sihvo's group might hold the main red forces by means of an attack. In this respect the plan was unpractical and did not take all the circumstances sufficiently into consideration. Sihvo's troops had been fighting defensive battles uninterruptedly and had not sufficient strength alone to hold the enemy by an attack. On the other hand, their attack might have been a success if it had started twenty-four hours earlier, provided that von Coler's column, as already stated, had been able to cut the red line of retreat, especially that along the Saimaa canal.

Once the enemy had succeeded in withdrawing his main force into Viipuri, it became the task of Sihvo's the batteries fails, or the removal of the Guard troops east, towards Koivisto, makes it necessary or inevitable to cease fire and destroy the batteries. Red Guard Headquarters, 25-4-18."

This last order of the dictator-commander-in-chief was thus given with a view to safeguard his own security and that of his fellow commanders. They all feared that the whites would cut off their retreat in some way or other; for instance with the aid of the coast batteries. Manner did not consider it necessary to give any instructions whatsoever as to the military situation, which was becoming more and more desperate. Thus the People's Commissaries, the red headquarters and a number of functionaries and men, "in accordance with an oral order given by the Commander-in-Chief, Manner", left on the night preceding the 26th in three ships for Petrograd. There was, however, one member of the People's Commissaries who showed that he was not altogether lacking in a sense of responsibility: Dr. Edward Gylling remained at Viipuri and did his best to help the troops stationed there.

#### THE FINAL STRUGGLE

group to cut the communications leading westward from it. This had to be done rapidly so that the reds would have neither time to obtain reinforcements from the west nor have an opportunity to escape from Viipuri and thereby confound the plan of the whites.

In order to protect the main body of Sihvo's group against a possible attack from behind, from Lappeenranta, the commander of the eastern army detached the 3rd Carelian Regiment (Jäger Captain H. Sarlin) from the group, with orders to capture Lappeenranta. Förberg's group, which had taken Savitaipale on the 25th, was also ordered to advance in that direction.

Meanwhile attempts had already been made to enter Viipuri from the south-east. On the morning of the 25th a battalion belonging to Jernström's column, supported by a battery of howitzers, had very rashly tried to break through the defensive positions, but had been repulsed with heavy loss. After von Coler's and Jernström's forces had met and the latter had been strengthened by a battalion, Wilkman, on the night of the 26th, was able to start the main attack against the south-eastern front of the fortress with slightly over four battalions, but it was evident from the outset that the power of resistance of the reds had been underestimated. Owing to shortage of ammunition the preliminary artillery bombardment had comparatively little effect, which left a task too difficult for infantry so weak in numbers and with only a moderate training. Terrific machine-gun fire met the Jäger battalions as they attacked over open ground against the enemy's strong positions, which were supported by the heavy guns of the garrison. The attack was checked with heavy loss; the 2nd Company of the 5th Jäger Battalion, the last to be put in, suffered especially badly, as it rushed forward

heroically towards the enemy's defences, over half being killed.

Von Coler's column operating against the north-eastern front of Viipuri, had been in readiness on the night of the 26th near the bridges on the eastern shore of Papula Bay, but as its attack was to be dependent on the success achieved by Jernström's column, and as the latter had failed completely, von Coler did not start. Instead, heavy machine-gun and artillery fire was directed against the red fortifications on the eastern shore of the bay. It was not until the 28th, and too late, that the roads alongside the Saimaa canal were closed, for the reds had withdrawn to Viipuri quite twenty-four hours before, mostly along those very roads.

As a result of the experience of the 26th April the army commander decided not to renew the assault on Viipuri until all available forces had been assembled and an effective preliminary artillery bombardment could be guaranteed. The next attempt was to be made on the night of the 28th April.

Meanwhile on the right wing of the eastern army, the advance continued at a good pace: Sarlin's group captured Lappeenranta on the morning of the 26th. Two battalions of Sihvo's group had reached Juustila, while three battalions were busy clearing up behind the advance. Thus, though rather slowly, the group was on its way to the Viipuri-Kouvola railway.

On the 26th the reds who were surrounded in Viipuri proposed terms of capitulation. The negotiations failed, because the whites demanded an unconditional surrender. The fighting therefore continued, and the reds made frantic efforts to break through; considerably over 2,000 escaped southward, of whom some subsequently fell into

#### THE FINAL STRUGGLE

the hands of Ausfeld's troops, and others got away either by sea or by land, through the woods and swamps, to Russia.

On the 24th-26th April the Commander-in-Chief of the white army visited the front to see the situation for himself. He considered it to be most important to force a decision in Viipuri swiftly. A final encounter had also begun in the region between Hämeenlinna and Lahti and, as the reds possessed an appreciable superiority in numbers there, surprises were possible, so that it was essential to be able to release some forces from Viipuri at the earliest opportunity. In order to hasten the capture of Viipuri the Commander-in-Chief placed the North Savo Regiment, which had been transferred to the neighbourhood of Tali, at General Löfström's disposal on the morning of the 27th April, but the latter had moved with his staff from Antrea to Tali without informing Headquarters in time. For this reason the order of the Commander-in-Chief regarding the North Savo Regiment was not delivered till the morning of the 28th, and these troops were therefore not taken into account in the plan of attack.

On the morning of the 27th the army commander visited Juustila in order to give instructions to Lieut.-Colonel Sihvo, whose group had been greatly scattered. Sihvo was instructed to cut all communications from Viipuri to the west and south-west as soon as possible and also to prevent attempts at escape by sea. In addition his group was to prepare to capture the Tienhaara fortifications north-west of Viipuri. Sarlin's group (3rd Carelian Regiment) operating to the west of Sihvo's occupied the station of Simola on the evening of the 27th after heavy fighting.

Major-General Wilkman's group was in readiness to

#### WILKMAN'S GROUP AND CAPTURE OF VIIPURI

attack Viipuri with its forces disposed as follows: von Coler's column (four battalions) faced the north-eastern front of the fortress and Jernström's column (seven battalions and one battery) the south-western front. The greater part of the artillery was assembled under Jäger Major L. Malmberg. Major G. A. Bäckman's detachment (a reinforced battalion), which had been instructed to prevent a break-through by the enemy from Viipuri southward along the coast, was driven back on the 27th April and a way of retreat was therefore still open in that direction.

On the night of the 28th the attack on the Viipuri defences was begun by Jernström's column, i.e. from the south-east. The preliminary artillery bombardment opened at midnight and three-quarters of an hour later the assault started. The resistance of the reds was not overcome till dawn, when the southern suburbs of Viipuri were taken by the whites; the laborious clearing work continued till the evening. The reds directed heavy gun fire on the suburbs, where several fires were started.

The troops could only be given a few hours' rest, and on the night of the 29th the attack was resumed. When the army commander at last received news that the North Savo Regiment had been placed at his disposal, the attacking troops received reinforcements, the regiment being placed at the disposal of Major-General Wilkman.

The revolutionaries were convinced meanwhile that the attack could be resisted no longer, and in the evening they began to evacuate the town, their intention evidently being to break through westwards to Hamina and Kotka and to escape thence by sea. A force of 7,000 reds accordingly marched through Sorvali and turned south-west along the coast-road at Tienhaara. It now fell to the lot of the

#### THE FINAL STRUGGLE

10th and 4th Battalions of the 2nd Carelian Regiment of Lieut.-Colonel Sihvo's group, stationed as a guard between Naulasaari on the Gulf of Viipuri and Suur-Merijoki, to stem the flood which was pouring south-west. The outposts of the whites were pushed aside and then began a bloody encounter in which the whites, weak in numbers, were strained to the utmost. At times the situation seemed desperate, especially as ammunition ran short, the ammunition lorries by some mistake having been taken back with the transport vehicles; nevertheless the Carelians held their ground and the reds were held, 500-600 being killed in the fight; another 5,000-6,000 were taken prisoners after their surrender on the morning of the 29th. The whites, who had fought in good positions, had lost only about 50 killed. The frenzy of the hand-to-hand fighting which occurred is shown by the fact that eighteen whites were wounded by being stabbed with knives.

Meanwhile, the main force of the eastern army had stormed the town after a heavy preliminary bombardment; Lieut.-Colonel Jernström's troops from the south from Kolikkoinmäki and Colonel von Coler's from the east across the bridges of the Papula Bay. The reds offered no further serious resistance and 12,000-15,000 were taken prisoners, about 300 guns and 200 machine guns, besides other booty, being also captured.

Before this final struggle the Civic Guards, who were imprisoned in the castle, disarmed their guards, took possession of the castle and hoisted a blue and white flag over the tower.

The eastern army led by Major-General Löfström had thus fulfilled its task with honour, despite the very severe demands which had been made of it. In point of quality, however, the white army was a very different weapon at

## THE DESTRUCTION OF THE RED WESTERN ARMY

the time of its second great offensive than it had been at the time of the capture of Tampere, and this improvement was largely due to the Jäger troops and their excellent officers. The white forces already constituted an army in the true sense of the word.

West of Lahti, where the red western army was making its last desperate attacks, the struggle still continued.

### *The Destruction of the Red Western Army*

---

The situation in West and South Finland about the 21st April was as follows:

The main forces of the German Baltic Division (about 4,000 men and 3 guns) were in Helsinki. Major-General Wolf's brigade (about 3,000 men and 13 guns) was near Riihimäki, the greater part of von Brandenstein's force (about 2,000 men and 8 guns) at Lahti, and Major Hamilton's detachment (800 men and 2 guns) at Loviisa.

Of the troops of the white western army Major-General Linder's group (about 4,000 men and 6 guns) was in the area Tyrvää—Peipohja—Huittinen; Colonel Hjalmarson's group (about 3,500 men and 10 guns) near Lempäälä; Lieut.-Colonel Bergström's group (about 1,500 men) on the isthmus between the lakes north of Tuulos and Hauho, and an army reserve of 2,000 men at Tampere. The Island Volunteer Corps, numbering 800 men and operating as an independent detachment, had reached Loimaa; Kalm's battalion of 500 men was on the Vääksy canal.

Of the reds Hjalmarson's and Bergström's groups were opposed by about 10,000 men altogether; about 4,000

#### THE FINAL STRUGGLE

men were retreating from the valley of the River Koke-mäenjoki towards Toijala. From Finland proper at least as large a group was retreating by Forssa and Loimaa towards Hämeenlinna and Toijala. The red forces which had been defeated at Riihimäki were falling back towards Hämeenlinna and Lahti, and von Brandenstein's brigade was confronted by a red group consisting of several thousand men. The numbers of all these red troops, i.e. of the western army, amounted to at least 40,000 men, and they had about 50 guns and over 200 machine guns.

These troops were in reality surrounded, but the ring had now to be closed tight enough to force the reds to surrender. The Commander-in-Chief had planned to transfer the main part of Linder's group to the left wing of the white western army, that is to west of Lake Päijänne, for he considered that the decisive encounter would take place in the area Lahti-Koski-Lammi. To carry out this re-grouping the red attacks towards Lempäälä would have to be stopped, and the Commander-in-Chief therefore directed Major-General von der Goltz to continue his advance from Riihimäki to Hämeenlinna, in the rear of the red Lempäälä group.

On the 25th April Wolf's brigade accordingly continued its advance northward, pushing back red detachments, and on the following day, the 26th, Hämeenlinna was captured after a stiff fight. By this time, however, the main red forces had passed through the town on their way eastward. General von der Goltz moved some of his troops from Helsinki to Riihimäki, and the divisional staff also moved there.

The proposed transfer of the main forces of Linder's group to the left wing of the western army had, however, to be abandoned, for on the 22nd the army commander,



THE FORTRESS OF INO AFTER THE RUSSIANS' DEPARTURE

Major-General Wetzer, received alarming news from Lieut.-Colonel Bergström's sector of the front. A red force of about 5,000 men concentrated in the neighbourhood of Hauho and Tuulos had made an attack northwards. As there was very little railway rolling stock available Bergström's troops might have to risk a defeat while the proposed re-grouping was taking place, and Wetzer therefore decided to despatch Linder's group via Urdiala and Viiala towards Hämeenlinna.

Linder's advance started on the 24th and encountered no appreciable opposition; the enemy was in retreat everywhere. The Island Volunteer Corps, which had been placed under Linder's orders, continued its march simultaneously towards Forssa, and Hjalmarson moved forward through Valkeakoski towards Sääksmäki. The red Lemppälä group had begun a hurried retreat. When Wolf's brigade entered Hämeenlinna on the 26th the white forces advancing from the west and south-west reached the line Forssa-Urjala-Viiala-Valkeakoski.

The Commander-in-Chief of the whites had a difficult task during these April days. He had to direct the large encircling movement against the red western army, he had to organize co-operation between the widely extended white western army and the German troops, he had to plan an attack from Savo along the valley of the Kymi, intervening if necessary in the operations on the Carelian front, and finally he had to watch the course of events on the eastern frontier carefully as the possibility of a Russian attack had still to be taken into account. In directing these operations General Mannerheim displayed determination and skill worthy of a great general. He was worried principally by the weakness of the force operating to the west of Lake Päijänne since the re-grouping he had planned—

#### THE FINAL STRUGGLE

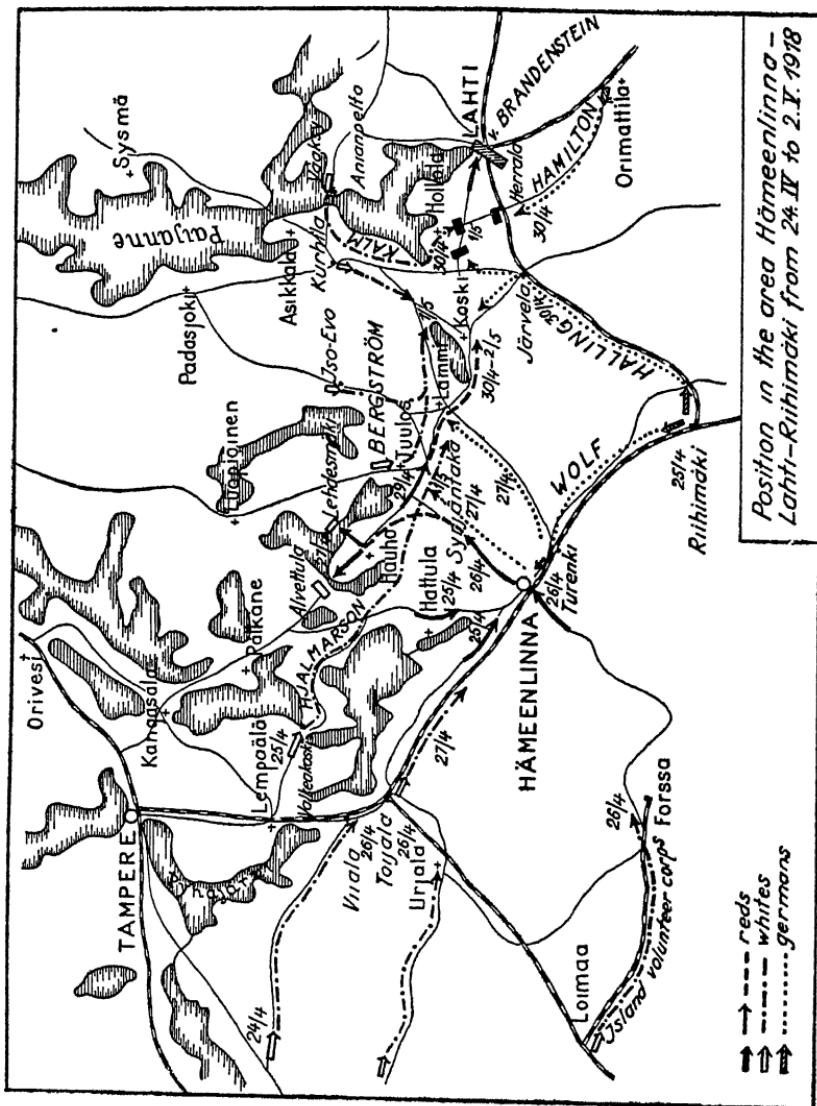
the transfer of the bulk of Linder's group to that area—had, as already stated, not materialized and it was to be feared that part of the red western army might succeed in breaking through. He therefore sent three battalions as reinforcements to Luopioinen and Padasjoki and a battalion of cyclists from von Brandenstein's force to Vääksy; Wetzer, too, detached two battalions to the left wing of his army, and in addition Hjalmarson's group was despatched from Valkeakoski to Hattula.

But on the 27th, before these reinforcements could reach the front, the reds made a serious attempt to break through both in a north-westerly and north-easterly direction from Hauho. The whites were only able to hold their ground with great difficulty and heavy loss, the advance of Hjalmarson's group from Valkeakoski at last checking the reds and forcing them back.

The mass of the red hordes were still pouring eastward and to cut off their retreat Major-General Wolf had despatched altogether five dismounted squadrons, a company of cyclists and six guns from Turengi to the neighbourhood about Lammi—Syrjäntaka. But this German detachment proved inadequate and was overwhelmed by the superior red forces, which continued eastward through Syrjäntaka and Lammi. Not even the German reinforcements sent on from Riihimäki were able to alter the situation.

The reds were not held up till they reached Lahti, where von Brandenstein's force, which had been reinforced, succeeded in stopping their eastward movement.

At the end of April the white troops operating in the Hauho—Päijänne area had been appreciably strengthened, and it might be expected that this part of the encircling ring, formerly weakly occupied, could withstand the shock of a possible fresh attempt at a break-through on the



#### THE FINAL STRUGGLE

part of the reds, especially as the Germans now proceeded to advance in that direction.

As Major G. Hamilton's force, advancing from Orimattila, had been placed under the command of Colonel von Brandenstein, the latter could, in accordance with orders, begin his attack on the 30th April with a force of 3,000 men. Major Kalm's Finnish battalion attacked through Hollola to surround the enemy from the north, while Hamilton carried out an encircling movement through Herrala from the south. Major Halling's force—two companies, four squadrons and one howitzer battery—which had been transferred from Riihimäki to Järvelä, simultaneously attacked Koski and Sairakkala. To the west of Lahti the heavy fighting ceased on the 1st May, when the reds began to surrender in masses.

Another red group continued its attempts to break through near Koski during the 1st May and the following night. Although completely exhausted after long marches and fighting under miserable conditions and pressed by the Germans and whites on all sides, the reds refused to yield. Time after time they tried to storm the white positions and in serried ranks suffered terrible losses. Not until the German troops operating south of Koski were reinforced and were able to attack on the morning of the 2nd May in co-operation with the white Finnish troops from the north, did these reds abandon the struggle and surrender.

The last great decision of the War of Independence had been gained and the fate of the red western army was sealed. The number of killed among the reds amounted to thousands, and the victors took about 20,000 prisoners, 50 guns, 200 machine guns and an enormous quantity of other war material.

#### THE END OF THE WAR

Finland's War of Independence was drawing to an end; the only large red force left was in the valley of the Kymi, and against it the white troops now aimed their final blow.

#### *The End of the War*

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(See map on page 211)

The Commander-in-Chief organized an effective concentric attack in the Kymi valley. On the 28th April Major-General Linder arrived at Mikkeli and was ordered to take over the command of the troops operating in Savo. He was to advance as speedily as possible to the south through Kouvola, while von der Goltz received orders to send part of his division via Loviisa towards Kotka; the German naval forces were to prevent any attempt at escape by sea. The North Savo Regiment, which had been sent along the coast from Viipuri and had reached Säkki-järvi, was placed under Linder's orders and instructed to complete the encirclement in the east.

Kouvola was captured on the morning of the 3rd May without a fight, the reds retiring mostly along the railway southward. Linder organized a strong pursuit, since to prevent their destructive activities a final victory had to be gained as soon as possible. On the 4th Kotka was already in the hands of the whites, and 4,000 reds surrendered. A great quantity of material was captured, including 4 mortars, 25 guns, 9 trench mortars, 50 machine guns, 8,000 rifles and large quantities of ammunition. In the meantime Hamina, evacuated by the reds, had also

#### THE FINAL STRUGGLE

been occupied and on the following day, the 5th May, a red detachment of 800 men, stationed at Ahvenkoski, surrendered to the Germans.

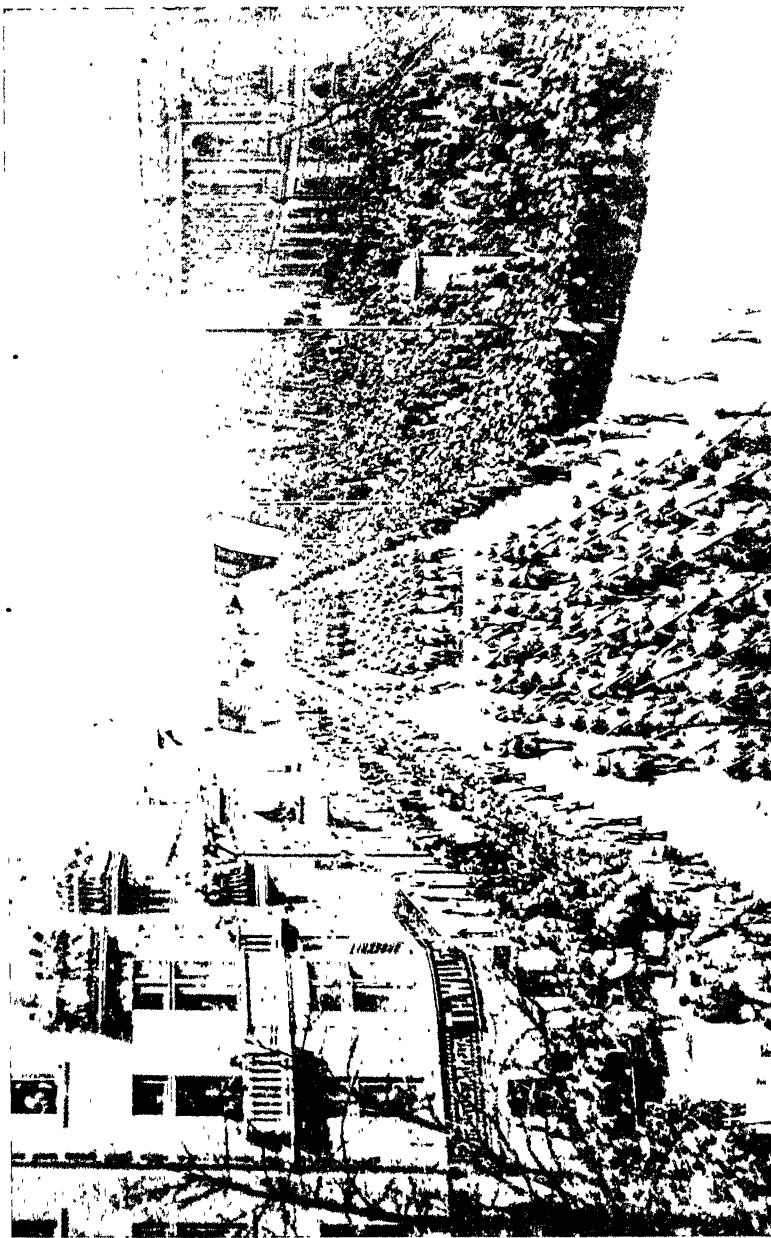
Altogether about 9,000 armed reds were taken prisoner during this last operation of the War of Independence; and among other material, 57 guns and 120 machine guns were captured.

In this way the plan of the reds to escape by sea to Russia with their arms had failed. On the 4th May, soon after Kotka had been captured by the whites, three Russian ships came into the harbour, their commanders being under the impression that the town was still in the hands of the reds. Barges had been prepared, and it was intended to begin the transportation of red troops, war material and stolen booty to Petrograd. These ships were confiscated.

The devastation arranged by the reds was also frustrated. Barrels of tar, detonators and other preparations were discovered in various parts of the town, the idea being to set fire to the town and the large timber yards, and at the same time to massacre a number of the citizens.

The rapidity of the white operations had saved hundreds of lives and a wealth of property. The credit for this was due principally to the Commander-in-Chief, General Mannerheim, who had wisely and at the right time reinforced the troops advancing from Savo, and had, besides, sent part of the eastern army to the Kymi valley immediately after the capture of Viipuri. By this means it had been possible to carry out the attack without any delay. The energetic action of Major-General Linder also deserves the highest praise.

Eleven days later the whites occupied the last base of the Russians on Finnish soil, the fortress of Ino, which had been voluntarily evacuated by the Russians on the



THE VICTORIOUS WHITE ARMY MARCHES THROUGH THE CAPITAL, MAY 16, 1918

previous day. The booty taken was large, including ten heavy guns and an enormous quantity of ammunition. A great part of the fortifications had, however, been blown up.

On the 16th May, a bright spring day, the white army, with the Commander-in-Chief at its head, marched into the capital, and was welcomed by the population with cheers of joy. It was justly proud in the knowledge that it had freed its country and had erected a dam on the northernmost front of Europe against Bolshevik barbarity.

A closer examination of the events of Finland's War of Independence, which to a superficial observer may seem of little significance, reveals many incidents and features which deserve to be noted. When investigating the art of war we note that, as a rule, the relative strength of the men is more essential than the absolute, and that the moral values sometimes prove to be of more weight and consequence than the material factors. Finland's War of Independence reveals to us in the exploits and achievements of generalship greatness and unwavering consistency, which from a chaotic and seemingly desperate situation had led to victory, and it is a stirring example of moral strength which spurred and inspired the men of Finland in 1918 in their hard struggle for the freedom of their country.

With the Great War as the background the events of Finland's War of Independence may seem of small consequence, but when estimating the significance of the final issue of the war, we see the proportions in a different light. In 1918 a buttress had been formed which secured the northern flank of Europe's eastern front when that front was tottering during the first years after the Great War.

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*A Description of the Ground of Finland*

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**F**inland, though possessing no mountain ranges, is yet far from flat, being much broken up by hills and valleys. Large tracts of the country are covered by forest—as much as 80 per cent of Central Finland—whilst the lakes and swamps are innumerable. Villages and towns are few and far between and, in consequence, means of communication are much restricted, particularly since lengthy detours are necessary to avoid lakes and rivers. Owing to the natural features of the country, visibility is also much restricted.

Strategically, the lakes and rivers of Finland offer valuable protection for a defender's flanks, while in winter communications improve, as more use can be made of direct routes over frozen lakes and rivers. Furthermore, these frozen lakes offer a good field of fire which is otherwise entirely absent in this land of forest. In normal winters the ice lasts from November until the end of April. Snow is usually deepest in March, varying from 45 to 60 cms., whilst it melts in Central Finland at the end of April. 1918 was a normal year in these respects.

## GENERAL MAP

## FRONT LINE IN THE MIDDLE OF MARCH

## SWEDEN





## APPENDIX

### LIST OF PRINCIPAL NAMES IN FINNISH AND SWEDISH

<i>Finnish</i>	<i>Swedish</i>
Ahvenkoski	Abborfors
Aunus	Olonetz
Hamina	Fredrikshamn
Hanko	Hangö
Helsinki	Helsingfors
Hyvinkää	Hyvinge
Hämeenlinna	Tavastehus
Juva	Jockas
Karjaa	Karis
Kaskinen	Kaskö
Kerava	Kervo
Kirkkonummi	Kyrkslätt
Kokemäenjoki	Kumoälv
Kristiinankaupunki	Kristinestad
Kymijoki	Kymmenälv
Lappeenranta	Villmanstrand
Leppävaara	Alberga
Mikkeli	St. Mickel
Oulu	Uleaborg
Pietarsaari	Jakobstad
Pori	Björneborg
Porvoo	Borga

APPENDIX

<i>Finnish</i>	<i>Swedish</i>
Pyhtää	Pyttis
Raahe	Brahestad
Sipo	Sibbo
Siuntio	Sjundea
Tammisaari	Ekenäs
Tampere	Tammerfors
Tornio	Tornea
Turku	Abo
Uusikaarlepyy	Nykarleby
Uusikaupunki	Nystad
Uusimaa	Nyland
Viipuri	Viborg
Virrat	Virdois
Vuoksi	Vuoksen
Vöyri	Vöra

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